



Window on Jordan

Waiting for Godot!

By Rasheed Al Roussan
Special to The Star
LIKE A tree blooming with beauty and vigor, the saga of humanity lives on. While we stand still on the threshold of time, the seasons come and go, like an endless circle. Yet, amidst the struggle, our unquenched thirst for hope and redemption is ongoing.
Samuel Beckett, the Irish poet, novelist and playwright was among those whose strife for life and liberty was so unique. "Waiting for Godot" is Beckett's priceless gift to humanity. It is a play about two old tramps, lost in time and space, leading a monotonous life and waiting for someone by the name of Godot, who is supposed to save them from damnation.
That is interesting is that on 19 November 1957, the play was acted at the San Quentin penitentiary. There, 14,000 convicts were watching an absurd play

about hope, damnation and salvation. It was an amazing experience for those prisoners, and they enjoyed it as much as any other highly sophisticated audience.
Some may wonder how on earth could a simple-minded audience appreciate a play that raised different intellectual opinions and riots among many?
Eventually, those convicts were also waiting for Godot, for someone to free them and purge their souls.
We are no exception, the difference is that we live in larger cells, waiting for the same thing: salvation and justice. The crossroads between 1998 and the coming year have almost ended, and we are still waiting, doing nothing but waiting.
When we try to forget or close our heavy eyes, flashbacks and snapshots of the past clash into our peaceful dreams: News in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, Nigeria, Algeria and Kosovo remain the same.
The moment we try to escape our nightmares, we would end up in another sphere: press oppression, the rise of car accidents, crimes, food prices, social reform and political instability. What is next? Will Godot arrive next year? Or the year after? Will we await salvation in a desert of hopelessness and defeat? Did we fall down the drain?
Unfortunately, there is no crystal ball to foresee the future and what it may hold. There are no soothsayers or magicians, but there are people who are seeking the best in everything.
On the other hand, in the middle of all this ignorance, some stand still like the two tramps in Beckett's play and the convicts in prison, waiting for Godot. Will he arrive one day? Well, the play closes with an open end!

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain
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Meeting of APU in Amman

Parliamentarians call on their governments to lift sanctions on Iraq

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer
PAN-ARABISM seemed to be the catchword this week as Arab parliamentarians flocked to Amman in a show of unity rarely seen before. Members of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) held a one-day emergency session in a bid to express solidarity with Iraq, which has been under UN sanctions since 1990.
The session began with a speech by His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, the Regent, who stressed the importance of international legitimacy, emphasizing that Jordan has never believed in the imposition of embargoes and sanctions on any country.
Sixteen delegations took

part in the meetings held especially to discuss the latest US-British aggression on Iraq. The session came days after the Lower House's decision to lift the sanctions imposed on Baghdad. Deputies called on Arab parliamentarians to take a unified decision to pressure their governments to reach a pan-Arab declaration to lift UN sanctions on Iraq.
The resolutions adopted by the APU condemned the United States-British attack on Iraq, while "calling" on the Security Council to prevent any similar aggression in the future. The APU also called on Arab governments to urge their governments to lift the eight-year siege imposed on that beleaguered state.
"Parliamentarians represent

public opinion, this decision is a clear indication of the Arabs' desire to put an end to the sanctions," said Mahmoud Kharabsheh, a Lower House deputy.
The initiative was taken by the Jordanian Parliament and submitted to the government. However, Kharabsheh, rapporteur of the Legal Committee of Lower House, told *The Star* that the decision to lift sanctions must in the end lie with the state.
"If the government refuses to carry out our decision and deputies insist on their stand, then they could always call for a no-confidence session in the government." All the delegates, who attended the meeting, approved the resolutions. However, parliamentarians

now face the awesome task of convincing their respective governments to honor the APU's resolutions.
"Every parliament has its own mechanism for executing the decisions," Kharabsheh pointed out. "Channels are open between our Council and the government, so if any difficulties happen, we would be able to solve them in a democratic manner," Kharabsheh pointed out.
Contrary to what others may suggest, Kharabsheh stressed that the Lower House does have the teeth to punish the government, if their decision is ignored or rejected. "The government response will be clarified in the coming

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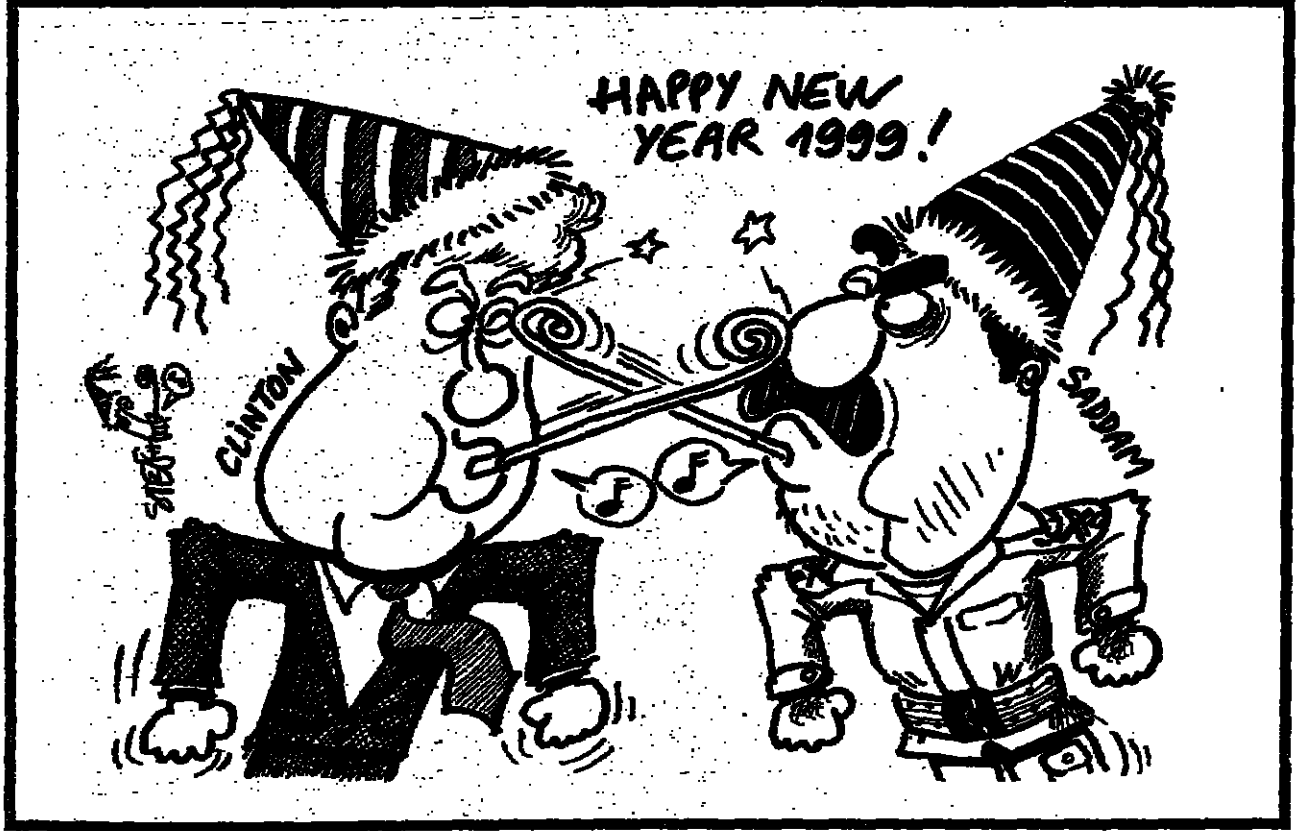
Jordanians jubilant as King begins journey home

Prince Hassan conveys good news to the nation

AMMAN (Star)—Jordanians received with joy and celebration the news of His Majesty King Hussein's full recovery from illness. During a special television broadcast on Tuesday, His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, the Regent, conveyed the good news to the Jordanian people and said the King has left Mayo Clinic in the United States and arrived later in Washington for a short visit.
The King completed the sixth session of chemotherapy treatment followed by a bone marrow transplant after the ablation of all lymphoma cells in the bone marrow.
The Regent read a letter sent earlier by King Hussein on the occasion, and explained that previous tests conducted on His Majesty resulted in a great and speedy recovery.
"Doctors at the Mayo Clinic have given permission for His Majesty to leave the hospital after having successfully completed his treatment," Prince Hassan said.
His Majesty the King left for the United States last June and underwent intensive treatment for cancer in the lymph glands at



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Iraqi aircraft 'flying in no-fly zone'

By Roula Khalaf
IRAQ LAST week attacked leading Arab governments, accusing Saudi Arabia of forcing the Arab League to postpone a meeting of foreign ministers and Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, of following the US policy of "double standards" in dealing with Iraq.
Baghdad also stepped up its defiance against the West, claiming that its own aircraft

were flying in the northern and southern "no-fly zones", despite US insistence on Monday that it would continue to enforce the zones.
Taha Yassin Ramadan, Iraq's vice-president, said that the Iraqi aircraft were "flying in a normal manner in Iraqi airspace" only a day after a clash in northern Iraq resulted in US aircraft firing on an anti-aircraft battery and killing four Iraqi soldiers.

Ramadan pledged last Sunday that Iraq would not recognize the no-fly zones set up by the 1990-1991 Gulf War allies to protect the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south. He told the AP television last Tuesday that the exclusion zones existed "only in the sick imagination of the British and American administration."

Ramadan also reiterated a Baghdad claim that Iraq had shot down a US aircraft on Monday, though the US declared that all its aircraft had returned safely.
On this regard, US warplanes, Wednesday fired at an Iraqi missile position in the southern no-fly zone near Baghdad. The latest action came in response to an attack on British planes patrolling the flight-exclusion zone. Six of eight surface-to-air missiles were fired at a British Tornado aircraft. A US fighter with other planes responded back immediately at the missile site. Such action is the second of its kind this week on the long chain of the military confrontation between Iraq and the Western warplanes. The first accident took place on Monday, in the northern Iraq no-fly zone, where Iraq said that four people were killed after an US aircraft fired back at the Iraqi position.
Iraq's wrath, meanwhile, was directed mainly at Arab leaders.

An Iraqi foreign ministry official condemned the Arab League's decision to put off a meeting on Iraq planned for Tuesday until 24 January as running counter to Arab League rules. The official insisted that the decision came hours after a secret visit to Cairo by the Saudi Foreign Minister Sa'ud Al Faisal.
Baghdad has been often trying to capitalize on the expressions of support it received in the Arab world during the four-day US and British military strikes earlier this month, and it has attempted to put pressure on Arab leaders to soften their policies towards its leadership.
"The meeting would have told the world and the Iraqi population that Iraq's isolation is over," said a senior Iraqi diplomat. "The problem is that, by 24 January, we don't know what the diplomatic situation will be, whether the momentum will be gone or diluted, and whether all of the 17 countries which had said they would attend the meeting would still hold on."
Anger against Arab governments was also expressed by Iraq's deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz. In a rare editorial in the state-led *Al Jumhuriya* newspaper, Aziz strongly criticized recent statements made by the Egyptian president who blamed the Iraqi leadership for the US-led air strikes.
"Mr Mubarak, leader of the biggest Arab country, did not say that most of world leaders, statesmen and writers condemned the [US-led] aggression, and said that it did not have any international legal basis, contradicted the UN Security Council resolutions, added Aziz, who concluded to say that, "Mr Mubarak is exercising for sure the same double standards as the US."
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Fez: a maze, a monument and a marvel

By Nicholas Woodworth
IN 1912, General Hubert Lyautey, first governor of the French protectorate of Morocco, took a startling decision: he began building a new city of Fez, in elegant contemporary French style, hard by the old city, the 1,000-year-old capital of Morocco.
It was an innovation in colonial thinking. Elsewhere, Lyautey's less enlightened colleagues, preoccupied with extinguishing the political and economic dominance of old elites, had either rebuilt such cities to their own imperial liking, or razed them.
Lyautey, progressive but a fervent imperialist himself, achieved the same ends by more subtle means. Moving local administration to the Ville Nouvelle, his new city, he transferred Morocco's political capital to Rabat on the Atlantic coast, and concentrated French economic development in the new port city of Casablanca. Fez he declared a historical monument. Eclipsed, it would never again shine as one of Islam's greatest centres of trade, learning and power.
Yet the walled medina that Lyautey chose to leave behind remains remarkable today

old Fez, home to 250,000 people, is the best-preserved and most complete medieval city of the Arab world. Now, all this seemed straightforward enough to me, at least on the printed page. Armed with guidebooks, maps and histories, I sat reading at the hole-in-the-wall Cafe Tuta, 100 yards inside Fez's blue-ceramic-tiled gate of Bab Bou Jeloud. I was planning a peaceful conquest of the city myself.
What more pleasing advance post could any campaign strategist ask for? With a glass of sweet mint tea in hand, with a shade-tree overhead, with the great Oum Kalthoum warbling sweet Arabic songs on the cafe radio, I was having a hard time concentrating on my task.
Which would I visit first the celebrated Kaikaouine Mosque, the shrine of Moulay Idress, or the Bou Inania water-clock? How would I get there via the spice market, the caravanserai on the Place an-Nejjarine, or the Street of the Slipper-makers?
It was hard to decide. Every time I raised my head I was distracted by bell-ringing water-sellers and curse-slinging donkey-

drivers, by vendors with discs of flat bread piled high on their heads, mysterious women gowned in the toes and veiled to the eyes, barrowmen with sticky pyramids of sweets, Muslim scholars in skullcaps and sun glasses. I laid out my plans with the military precision of a Lyautey and followed the crowd into the depths of the medina.
There is nothing straight-forward about Fez. It is said the old walled city is made up of 9,400 winding streets, alleys and passageways, and at first glance one is hardly distinguishable from the other. In less than five minutes I was lost.
Never mind the detailed directions given in the guidebooks in the human antihill that is Fez, so complex are its labyrinthine twists and turns, so irresistible is the surge of its crowds, so great are its sensual assaults on eye and ear and nose, that such instructions are pure fantasy. You could have equipped me with a compass, a sextant and slide-rule, a satellite navigation system so strange and confusing is Fez that I still would have been utterly confused. In the 1880s, a visiting Italian diplomat, Edmondo de Amicis, was perturbed by the secretiveness, mystery and decrepitude of Fez's streets. He was alarmed, he wrote, by its long, covered passages, "dark as a cellar, where you have to

feel your way." Worse still were "blind alleys, recesses, dens full of bones, dead animals, and heaps of putrid matter, the whole steeped in a melancholy twilight."
In his dismay I am certain he got lost, too de Amicis may have been lying it on a little thick: there are stretches of busy bazaar, illuminated by shafts of sunlight filtering down through cane matting, that are positively, theatrically cheerful.
But his state of despair must have resembled my own when I finally pitched up, willy-nilly and glassy-eyed, at the Place Sefarine an hour or two later. It was the first place I recognised from the descriptions in the guidebooks.
So relieved was I that I studiously ignored the diminutive presence that attached itself to me there. As I moved beneath ancient fig-trees, watching metal-workers hammer out vast copper cauldrons, it tagged along like a shadow. Even when I pretended not to hear over the sound of the banging, the small voice at my side persisted.
But the words "mosque", "university", "shrine" were tempting. All those places had defeated me and my campaign was in tatters. Finally I gave in, and Rachid, 10-

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Jordanians jubilant as King begins journey home

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The King has informed the nation of his illness soon after his arrival at the clinic. During a live interview on JTV on 29 July, the King assured the nation of his health while he was undergoing the first cycle of treatment. Other cycles were to follow as His Majesty passed successfully each of the six stages required for the treatment. Doctors at the clinic were the ones to determine the duration of each cycle that lasted between 21 to 26 days.

His Majesty the King is expected to arrive at the Kingdom during the Eid al-Fitr holidays, although AFP reported he is due to come home this Monday. In his letter, King Hussein said that he will first depart for Washington where he will "stay for a few days before leaving for London and then, God willing, for Amman to be in the dear homeland, with my dear people and family."

"Doctors and their colleagues in the US are pleased with the results of the tests that were taken as we conclude our stay at Mayo until we return for a new appointment next March," said His Majesty, who went on to tell his brother, Prince Hassan, that "the entire Royal Family has decided to inform you of the good news, as soon as we get it so that you announce it to our family in the beloved Jordan, and to all over the world."



In its session, Speaker of the Lower House Abdel Hadi Majali delivered a statement on behalf of the deputies expressing their great relief at the good news concerning the health of the King and conveyed their congratulations to all the Jordanian citizens.

Meanwhile, the search for a radical solution, seems to be near. "The only way is simply to carry out the Iraqi file to the General Assembly of the United Nations," Refou' explained. By doing this, he said, the power of veto, which the United States and Britain are always threatening to use, would be taken out of their hands.

Parliamentarians call on their governments to lift sanctions on Iraq

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days since the government has to look at all factors before it can reach a decision," Kharabshah maintained.

For many the real goals behind the organization of this event were never achieved. "Jordanian parliamentarians succeeded in scoring a public achievement to ease public anger which was clearly seen in the massive demonstrations that spread over the Kingdom," said Dr Saeed Abu Meizer, former head of the Democrats Association.

"The conference has not adopted a stance that would lead to the lifting of sanctions off Iraq since Parliamentarians only saw the issue of 'withdrawing confidence' as only a possible option," Abu Meizer said.

He said that he didn't expect anything to happen, since governments have not shown any serious enthusiasm in pressuring to lift UN sanctions. He was disappointed by the fact that the Arab Foreign Ministers' conference, which was to take place in Cairo on Wednesday, was postponed.

The Iraqi delegation, which took part in the session, urged the participants to adopt a firm stance towards ending the UN sanctions. But at the same time, all attempts to provide financial aid to Iraq were refused.

Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Sa'adoun Hammadi, apologized to Prince Hassan,

after an Iraqi delegate made what were deemed as inappropriate phrases in the opening session.

Later Minister of Interior Nayef Al Qadi stepped in to stop a meeting between Hammadi and members of the Professional Associations from taking place. Government sources said Hammadi should have followed protocol before scheduling such meeting. Minister of Information Nasser Joudah later said the Jordanian decision was a sovereign one.

"We refuse any compromise regarding the Iraqi issue. But members of the Iraqi delegation should have followed the proper diplomatic protocol in addressing the host country. 'Diplomacy is a must in such circumstances,'" Abu Meizer concluded.

However, others believe that despite the differences, the APU is the first official Arab demonstration of support for Iraq since 1990. "Organizing such an event in a short time shows how keen the members of the APU are to reach Arab reconciliation," said Dr Faisal Al Refou', head of the Political Science Department at the University of Jordan.

"All members of the APU attended except Kuwait and Arab reconciliation isn't affected by Kuwait's stance," Refou' pointed out.

"We should not underestimate the Arab Parliaments since they could lead their countries through practicing pressures on their govern-

ments," Refou' added.

According to the international laws and conventions, the majority of the members of the General Assembly and nine members of the Security Council—who aren't obliged to have the approval of the five permanent members—have the right to bring to the General Assembly any case or dilemma that threatens international security.

Dr Refou' explained that "even if the resolutions of the Assembly are not put into practice like those taken by the Security Council, such action will, at least, put the Iraqi issue before the international community rather than at the mercy of the US and Britain."



Supporters for the lifting of sanctions on Iraq rally outside the RCC as the meeting of the APU got underway, Sunday.

Fez: a maze, a monument and a marvel

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year-old polyglot and street-smart kid in a city where the term takes on literal significance, became my guide.

Suddenly Fez became a different place. With me following smartly behind, Rachid would loop off down a busy lane full of tiny shops, duck into a blind alley, follow a steep zig-zag path heading upward, turn into a gate that looked like a thousand other gates. Suddenly, in a place I was least expecting it, there would be one of Fez's Middle Age curiosities: a fountain richly worked in carved stucco stalactites; an 800-year-old medersa, or residence for students of the Koran; a fondouk, an ancient hostel for merchants and their caravans; the city's vividly tinted tanner's vats, still in use, and still reeking with the best of medieval

stinks.

My favourite trick of Rachid's came a couple of hours later, when he dragged me into the back of an obscure carpet shop and up a dark stairway. I was afraid I was being led to a room for some soft-selling marketing everyone in Fez wants to sell you something. But instead we emerged on to a sunny terrace with the city spread around us.

For the first time I had my bearings. I could see the steep-sided valley into which the city lies folded, the high walls which completely encircle it and, on the valley rim, the stone tombs of the Merenid sultans, who brought Fez to its greatest flowering in the 13th century.

Even better, though, right below us lay two of Fez's most revered sites. To the left, rose the shrine and burial site of Moulay Idriss II. There is no

indication that the 9th century ruler was especially saintly, but as the founder of Morocco's first royal dynasty, he has long been at the centre of a local religious cult.

To the right, lay a broad complex of green tiled roofs, the Kairouine mosque and university. When Moulay Idriss encouraged the settling of Fez by refugees from Andalusian Cordoba and Kairouan in Tunisia two of the most cultured cities in western Islam he laid the way for its pre-eminence. For centuries afterwards Fez was known, even by medieval Europeans, as one of the greatest seats of mathematical, philosophical and medical learning in the world.

It is from his studies here that the 10th century Pope Sylvester II is said to have brought Arab mathematics to the western world.

Surely I did not need advanced mathematics to find my way around Fez, I reasoned. From up here it all looked so easy; I only had to follow the city's contours and inclines, and maybe do a little position-reckoning by the sun, and I could not go wrong. As Fez's 300 mosques all broke out at the same time into a call to prayer, I decided I might risk it on my own again. Rachid went his way and I went mine.

Of course, five minutes later I was lost. In full, shambling retreat, I spent the rest of the afternoon in a modern cafe on an arrow-straight boulevard in Lyantey's Ville Nouvelle. I had whole quarters of the old city left to conquer. My own insistent prayer was that I would be able to find Rachid again next day.

Car accidents

When do we stop?

By Louis Ibrahim
Star Staff Writer

WHEN A criminal kills someone, he usually uses a gun, a knife, or a rope. However, in Jordan, there is a more popular murder weapon, the ordinary car!

According to official statistics, over 800 traffic accidents took place in the Kingdom during one week earlier this month. This means that over 113 accidents occurred every day.

And statistics also show that nine people were killed and 268 others injured between 12 and 19 December. Today, high speed, inferior road design and lack of safety measures on our causeways are some of the reasons behind the spilling of innocent blood on our roads.

Driving a car or crossing a street requires awareness, both by pedestrians and drivers.

On the other hand, some people think of driving as if it is an adventure, a test where one must boldly show his mastery at astronomical speeds. For those reckless drivers, time or space does not count, whether it's a highway or a narrow road.

A 20-year-old student from a University Intermediate Community College was recently killed in a hit-and-run accident on the highway between the Sports City and Zarqa, recently.

Hanan Abu A'mer, who was in her second year in Business Administration, was killed by a heedless driver in a Mercedes, when she tried to



Students demonstrate to protest the death of a colleague in a road accident

cross the street on her way home.

Both the Amman Governorate and Police Directorate promised to build an overpass for pedestrians within the next two weeks.

Their reaction came as a result of a large demonstration by hundreds of students outside the college. The students expressed their rage for the tragic end of their colleague. But this is a tragedy among many in a line of accidents.

People are still complaining about the traffic issue in Jordan. Reckless drivers and poor road design are the two major reasons behind the increasing number of traffic

casualties.

Moreover, records show that drivers between the age of 21 and 30 are on the top list of high speed drivers. These form about 40 percent of the total drivers who are involved in car accidents.

The Amman Governorate has one of the highest accident rates in the Kingdom. It registered over 60 percent of accidents during the same week. This is 13 percent. But forget about these numbers to focus on the problem itself.

Since the early '90s, the Kingdom has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of motor vehicles on its roads. Teenagers still con-

sider the car as a form of entertainment rather than as a vehicle for transport.

On the other hand, highways and main roads should be designed to ensure the safety of both drivers and pedestrians. Unfortunately, such roads are suffering from poor engineering.

Designing streets and civil engineering require a comprehensive study for every area before implementing any scheduled plan, and this takes time and money.

The Traffic Dept. and the Amman Governorate have worked steadily to assure the public that the issue is under control, but words without deeds are not enough!

For the Record

Crown Prince meets Algerian delegation

AMMAN (Petra)—His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Monday received Abul Qader Ben Salah, chairman of the Algerian People's Council (APC), who conveyed to His Majesty King Hussein and to Prince Hassan the greetings of Algerian President El Yamine Zerwal, and congratulations for His Majesty's recovery. Ben Salah expressed satisfaction about the level of relations between Jordan and Algeria. He stressed APC's keenness on developing ties of cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the economic field. Ben Salah hailed Jordan's policies and lived stands. He expressed APC's appreciation on Jordan's reasonable and active stand regarding the Iraqi crisis and its work for ending the suffering of the Iraqi people. During the meeting, Prince Hassan stressed the necessity to adopt reasonable stands and to refrain from yielding to emotions in dealing with the situation in Iraq. He urged for practical and objective steps that would contribute to ending the suffering of the Iraqi people.

Meeting in Gaza

GAZA (Petra)—Palestinian President Yasser Arafat received in Gaza on Tuesday Head of the Jordan's Representation Office in Gaza, Ziyad Majali. Arafat enquired about His Majesty King Hussein's health and asked Mr Majali to convey his greetings to His Majesty and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent. Talks during the meeting covered developments relating to the peace process as well as Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

CAA captain returns

AMMAN (Petra)—Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Captain Jasser Ziyad and his accompanying delegation returned to Amman after a several-day visit to Pakistan during which they held talks with officials from the Pakistani Civil Aviation Authority and the Pakistani Airlines on means to bolster cooperation between the two sides. Captain Ziyad said that the two sides agreed on increasing the number of flights for the Royal Jordanian (RJ) and the Pakistani Airlines by an average of two weekly flights for each between Amman and Karachi as from the beginning of 1999. RJ and the Pakistani Airlines currently operate one weekly flights for each between the two countries.

Syrian delegation

MAFRAQ (Petra)—President of the Syrian People's Council Abdul Qadir Qaddourah and his accompanying delegation returned to Syria after taking part in meetings of the emergency session of the Arab Parliamentary Union which was held in Amman on Sunday. He seen off by parliamentary deputy Fawwaz Al Zu'bi and the Governor of Mafraq, Theib Suleiman.

Taba's demands an end to sanctions

AMMAN (Petra)—President of the Arab Businessmen Council Hamdi Taba'a hailed the Pan-Arab national stand of the Jordanian parliament which called for lifting sanctions on Iraq. A statement issued by the Council on Sunday appealed for Arab parliamentarians, who are gathering in Amman to truly reflect the desire of the peoples of our nation in demanding an end to the sanctions and to take a united Arab stand that preserves Arab dignity and safeguards the nation's interests. The Arab people's outrage stirred by the recent US-British attack on Iraq should be crowned with an overall Arab lifting of UN sanctions imposed on Iraq, Libya and Sudan and standing firmly by the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, Taba'a said. He expressed hope that an Arab summit will be held.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: 1998 was another year of trials and tribulations, only this time it was magnified by the chaos in the international money markets which led to a fall on the global economy. The threats, the threats and then air strikes on Iraq by the United States produced a year of instability and anguish among the people of the region. Jordan was one of the countries that bore the brunt of these developments. Whether on the political, economic and social scene, the effect was riveting. Starting with the Ma'an riots, the deadlock in the peace process and the stagnating state of the economy, all these were very much part of a reactive international cycle. Jordan was a mere cog in a very mean machine. In this excerpted chronology we go back and look at some of the events that shaped 1998.

◆ Jordan participates as a military observer in the United States-Israeli Turkish military maneuvers in the Mediterranean. Much criticism from Lower House deputies and Professional Associations.

◆ Five influential Iraqi businessmen and a senior diplomat were murdered in Al Rahiyah, West Amman. Among the deceased were Iraqi diplomat in Amman Hekmat Al Hejji. Murderers captured by special operation commands led by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Al Hussein in Sahab. Murderers confessed to drug deals.

◆ The country is snowed under. Heavy blizzards and snowfalls create havoc and paralyze Amman and the surrounding regions.

◆ Deputy Ahmed Oweidi Al Abbadi is in the news again. His latest is the same of the diatribe, accusing the government of corruption and nepotism. He then attacked Jordanians of Palestinian origin.

◆ Trial of Roger Garaudy in France continues to arouse public interest in Jordan. The French philosopher is being tried for what is allegedly being called his anti-semitic views. Jordanian intellectuals and academics have written to French President Jacques Chirac pointing to the gross injustice of the trial.

◆ Lower House deputies get a hefty pay rise. Their monthly salary is now JD 1500, in line with those of the ministers. Their previous salaries were merely JD 950.

◆ The Temporary Press Law of 1997 was thrown out by the Higher Court of Justice. The press law was imposed back in May of that year by the government of Abdel Salam Al Majali. The rejection of the law meant that 13 weekly newspapers could resume publication.

◆ American Middle East policy and the bombing of Iraq go side by side. USA moved to carry out military strikes on Iraq. "Desert thunder" was launched under the leadership of the United States. However, the strikes were averted in the end.

◆ Prime Minister Majali reshuffles his Cabinet. Dr Fayez Tarawneh becomes Royal Court Chief. Of interest is the appointment of the Islamist Dr Basam Al Oumash to head the Ministry of Administrative Development.

◆ Four individuals arrested in Jordan for possession of two stolen Picasso's. The two unidentified paintings, along with a bronze statue, were being offered for sale in Jordan for JD 9 million! Smugglers brought the stolen items through the border but captured while trying to sell them.

◆ Famous Arab singers were the center of attraction in the Arab Cultural Festival which was sponsored by the satellite channel of Orbit. Tunisian singer Lutfi Bushnaq, Iraqi Kathem Al Saher, Egyptian Hani Shaker, and the Lebanese singer Najwa Karam were among the stars of the three-day festival.

◆ Southern town of Ma'an was put under police surveillance after a two-day pro-Iraqi riots which ended in the death of one civilian and the injury of many. Leith Shbeilat was arrested and sent to prison after being accused of advocating riots in the town. The former president of the Engineers Association was sentenced to one year and a half in prison.

◆ 29 released in the wake of the Ma'an riots. His Majesty King Hussein plays pivotal role in their release. Another 23 are on the way to being released.

◆ Statement made by Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon to assassinate Hamas political leader Khaled Mish'al, shocks Jordanians. The statement comes amidst diplomatic efforts to mend damaged relations between Jordan and Israel following last September's failed attempt on Mish'al's life.

◆ HRH Crown Prince visits Tel Aviv. The one-day visit was described as a "land-mark change for the better." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sees visit as a new beginning.

◆ UN Secretary General Kofi Annan visits Jordan. He is received by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, The Regent, and taken to Al Hussein and Hittin Refugee Camps.

◆ The Press and Publication Dep't files a

lawsuit against a foreign journalist. The correspondent of the London-based *Al Quds Al Arabi* is accused of writing articles that harm the image and dignity of Jordan.

◆ The dispute over the new draft law for saving funds raised tension between government and private sector. The government denied its attempt to intervene in the management and investment of these funds, and assured investors that its objective is to protect "small investors" from corruption and malpractice. However, the Professional Associations called these as these excuses. The assembly general of the Arab Bank employees saving fund decided to dissolve the fund and liquidate its assets, at JD 30 millions.

◆ Minister of Social Development, Dr Mohammed Khair Munsar, declared that 8 to 9 percent of the population live under poverty line. There are 400,000 poor individuals in the Kingdom, which means that about 50,000 families are in need of financial aid. He added that between 21-22 percent lie within the limited income category.

◆ "Titanic" snatches 11 Oscars on the 70th annual Academy Award. It was a night to remember for director James Cameron. The epic, the visual effects and animation put the movie on top of the box office.

◆ Issue of bad checks come under the spotlight. More and more checks are bouncing back. Experts say that this reflects the downward trend of the economy.

◆ Hamas Palestinian military leader Muhyideen Al Sharif killed in an explosion in Ramallah. Palestinian police stated that an autopsy showed that Al Sharif was shot dead before the bomb went off.

◆ Islamic fortunes surge in local elections. Many from the Islamic Action Front and the Muslim Brotherhood say that the elections show that the Islamic movement is safe, sound, and growing strong among the grass-roots. Islamists boycotted the November 1997 parliamentary elections.

◆ British Prime Minister Tony Blair visits Jordan. He was received by His Majesty King Hussein, Crown Prince Hassan and other top government officials. The visit was seen as important to help revive the stalled peace process.

◆ Second Contingency Operational Procurement Exhibition (COPEX '98) was organized under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, the Regent. Delegations from around the world attended the venue and displayed the latest technology in military industry.

◆ Local transport companies face uphill struggle as less and less tourists are coming in the country. To offset their financial losses the three transport company—Alpha, JETT and Petra—decide to streamline their bookings system to regulate the tourist groups.

◆ Further moves to inject life into the stalled peace process. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pressures



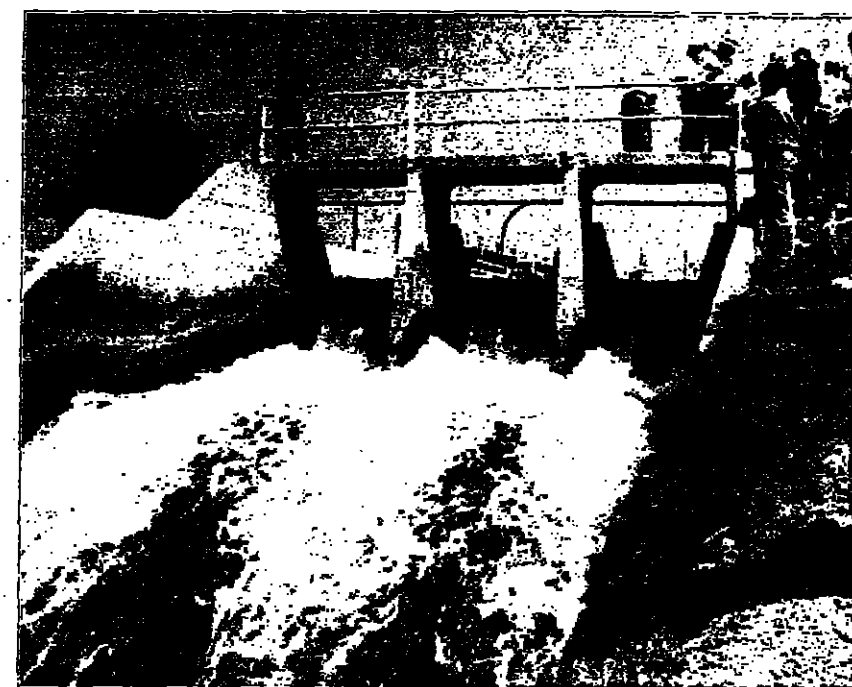
Scene the Ma'an riots

Netanyahu to accept US proposals.

◆ About 38 Jordanian prisoners are released from Kuwaiti jails. This was part of a general amnesty. A delegation of the family of prisoners were allowed a visit to Kuwaiti jails. This was organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

◆ International Press Freedom Day was celebrated in Jordan. On the 45th anniversary of the King Assumption of Constitutional Powers, the Jordan Press Association called on His Majesty to pardon all those journalists being tried in court for allegedly violating the press law. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists placed two Arab leaders on the list of the "10 enemies of the press for 1997". Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali and President Zeine Al Abedine of Tunisia were in the group.

◆ A "clean-up campaign" by the General



Water, water everywhere. Not a drop to drink!

Intelligence Department to purge the country of fundamentalist elements. The campaign started in March followed a series of bombings in the country. Seven Jordanians arrested and one Arab being tracked down. Activities first started by the bombing of a kindergarten of the Modern American Schools. A fire-bomb of a highway police station in Baydar Wadi Al Seer and setting on fire of a car belonging to Mohammad Rasoul Al Kilani, a former GID chief.

◆ His Majesty King Hussein paved way for a bilateral dialogue with different public and private sectors in the Kingdom, where he met with leaders from Professional Associations. The meeting put an end to a chapter of tension and created a new era based on mutual respect.

◆ World Cup kicks off in France. Celebrations started with a 60-foot-high balloon as 32 countries took part in the international festival. After a spectacular month which witnessed historical triumphs and shocking defeats, France clinched the world cup of '98.

◆ An 18-year-old murdered 11 members of his family and his best friend. The teenager, who shocked the Jordanian public, planned to kill his parents, brothers and sisters after the father threatened to kick him out if he fails his Tawjihi.

◆ Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu expanded the borders of the Jerusalem Municipality. The action was seen as a gross violation of the international Palestinian-Israeli agreements.

◆ Residents of West Amman report a change in the taste and color of their drinking water. Officials attribute change to high temperatures, algae and dead larva. However, unofficial reports state that the unprofessional administration in Zal, and the carelessness of officials at Ministry of Water as main reason.

◆ Misleading growth rate figures in Jordan pose many questions regarding economic growth rates. Officials expected a 5.2 percent growth, however, it only reached 0.8 percent in 1996. The figures of 1997, expected to reach 5.3 percent, was only a mere 2.7 percent.

◆ Ongoing demand for the US dollar led to a rise in its value that ranged between 713 fills to 715 fills compared to the fixed rate of the Central Bank of 711 fills. This demand followed His Majesty King Hussein's illness.

◆ King Hussein reassured Jordanians that the diagnosed type B-cell Lymphoma is curable. He emphasized that his morale and spirit are high. In addition, Mayo Clinic stated that His Majesty completed a comprehensive series of tests. The therapy will be administered on six occasions every 21-24 days.

◆ About 1439 artists, including 87 poets and 42 groups from 30 countries, took part in the annual Jerash Festival of Arts and Culture. Marcel Khalifeh, Diana Hadad, Abdel Majeed Abdallah and Elias Karam were the stars of the show.

◆ Lower House passes Press and Publication law of 1998. Deputies have not kept their promise to the political, social and professional institutions to prevent the press draft from becoming law. The majority voted in favor of implementing the law, while 10 deputies voted against.

◆ People called on the government to decrease the prices of bread following the decline of wheat prices internationally. The prices reached \$240 per ton two years ago, but they dropped to \$135-140 per ton.

1998 revisited

A fateful year

ment rate at 14-15 percent; Center for Strategic Studies put it between 25-27 percent.

◆ Temperatures in Amman reached 42 degrees centigrade following a depression from the north of the Arab Peninsula. The lower regions in the kingdom like the Jordan Valley reached 46 degrees centigrade.

◆ Nahed Hattar, chief editor of *Al Mithaq* weekly newspaper, attacked in the presence of his wife and children.

October

◆ A number of school students suffered side-effects following tetanus and typhoid vaccinations which they received in schools around Amman, Zarqa and Koura. Reports indicated the vaccines were not stored correctly.

◆ Minister of Information Nasser Judeh, stated that the Anti-Corruption Directorate found 51 new cases of irregularities in state departments. These included cases of tax evasion and forgery. The Minister said that 37 people were sent to the courts.

◆ More than 1400 Jordanian prisoners abroad, including 742 in Syria. Families of prisoners organized a meeting with the Parliament and called on those concerned to pressure for their release.

◆ Wye Plantation Accord signalled a break in the 18-month deadlock in the peace process. A signing ceremony was held in Washington. The accord gave Netanyahu the security plan he needed, while it allowed Arafat 520 square kilometers of the West Bank desert and hills, which was less than what he asked for.

◆ Palestine National Authority implements Wye accord. PNA arrests more than 100 members of Hamas. Also places Hamas's spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin under house arrest in Gaza.

◆ Ministry of Water sold parts of an oil pipeline to a businessman for JD 250,000. Lower House deputies condemn sale since the pipe was in a good condition and that the prices should have been higher.

December

◆ HRH Prince Hassan opened the ordinary session of parliament with a speech concentrating on the Jordanian-Palestinian bilateral relations. Abdel Hadi Al

Majali is elected as speaker of the Lower House.

◆ PCC votes on amendments in the charter. Palestinian Central Council votes to eliminate articles from the Palestinian National Charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

◆ Marital violence against women is turning into a dangerous phenomenon. No official statistics, but there are more institutes for helping those who fall in the zone of violence than ever before. The Hotline program—which is one of the activities carried out by the Jordanian Women Union—receives 15 calls a day from women complaining from domestic violence.

◆ Palestinian opposition groups held a conference in Damascus, inviting all those who oppose the peace process. The conference aimed at expressing the refusal of canceling or amending the Charter. However, the Jordanian delegation was banned from traveling to Syria.

◆ Cancerous bread additives provoke public worry. Contaminated and prohibited additives were reported to be used in three bakeries, which were closed by the authorities.

◆ Public demonstrations in support of Iraq following US and British air strikes. Thousands swept the streets condemning the aggression on Iraq and called for the lifting off the sanctions.

◆ Lower House decides to lift sanctions on Iraq. An anonymous decision was taken by representatives of the Lower House to lift sanctions on Iraq, and called on the Arab Parliaments to take a similar step. Moreover, HRH Prince Hassan, the Regent addressed the Arab community to emphasize Jordan's stand in refusing sanctions on any country.



Tarawneh gets top job in government

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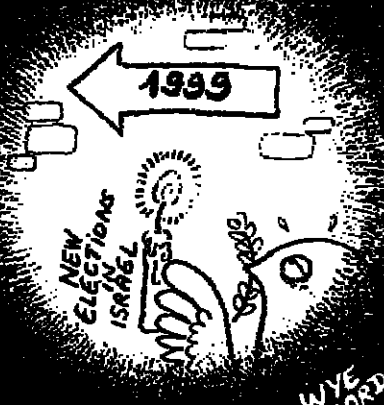
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THE END OF THE TUNNEL?



Our Say...

Arab summit: to hold or not to hold

THE POSTPONEMENT of the Arab foreign ministers' consultative meeting, which was scheduled to be held in Cairo on Wednesday to discuss the call for convening an Arab summit, is a further blow to efforts to address the Iraqi issue in general and the latest US-British aggression in particular.

The meeting was adjourned at the request of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both of whom are against Iraq's participation in the proposed summit. The Arab League, the body responsible for organizing the Arab summit, has been paralyzed ever since Iraqi troops marched into Kuwait in August 1990.

The events, which followed, drove a wedge into the Arab body to the extent that calls for holding an Arab summit were always shunned by those who believed Iraq's estrangement should continue as long as the present regime in Baghdad remains in power. It is no secret that the United States has in the past and may have in the last few days put pressure on its close Arab allies to derail efforts aimed at convening the summit.

There is a growing feeling among Arab governments that the Iraqi issue needs to be addressed fully and responsibly. Any review of this matter would almost certainly condemn unilateral US policies aimed at the destruction and division of Iraq. At the same time, the extent of the humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq as a result of the UN sanctions will bring about a strong Arab call for the immediate lifting of the embargo. Some Arab countries may even begin breaking the siege as a result.

The Arab Parliamentary Union meeting in Amman this week was a litmus test of how things may turn out if the summit is convened. It is almost certain that Iraq's attendance of the summit will have a double effect. On the one hand, it may launch the long-awaited openness and reconciliation process leading to the rehabilitation of Iraq and the reintroduction of an Arab diplomatic role in the Gulf crisis. On the other hand, it may backfire, splitting the Arabs even further and destroying the last hope of salvaging the Arab order. Both scenarios are possible, the worst being the more probable in this toxic political atmosphere.

Regardless of how the political winds will blow, postponing the Arab summit is no longer an option. Soon, the US and Britain will strike again at Baghdad and other cities and the onus of bludgeoning Iraq further will fall on those who have derailed the summit.

The summit must be held eventually. Arab foreign ministers should be allowed to meet and discuss its chances, agenda and further issues on the table. If Operation Desert Fox was aimed at destroying the regime of Saddam Hussein, then it has failed to do so. In fact, it has complicated things especially for the anti-Saddam camp in the Arab world.

If the summit is not to be held now then what is the alternative? Iraq is now challenging the legitimacy of the no-fly zones, which lack UN support anyway, and military confrontations over this issue are likely within days. The Arabs must be ready to deal with the consequences of their decision to postpone the summit.

● Armed tribal Yemenis hold their weapons above their heads in a show of support for independent election candidate Abdullah Al-Bukhri in Koneib, west of Sanaa April 1997, ahead of the country's parliamentary elections. Four British hostages were killed and three other Westerners injured 29 December when Yemeni security forces stormed kidnappers holding 16 tourists, a Yemeni official said.

Reuters



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Letter from the Levant

1998: A year of the superfluous

By Osama El-Sherif

AS 1998 draws to a close, it is prudent to take stock of its legacy to determine how the Arabs, as people and states, fared in the past three hundred and sixty odd days. Naturally it would take robust research institutes and men of letters to make a full and detailed assessment of the year's chronicles before drawing conclusions. So we leave this mammoth task to those who are more capable. But average people still have the free luxury of looking back at the past year to evaluate and make their own judgments, no matter how subjective, arcane and unscientific. I would like to make my own personal, and very subjective, interpretation of 1998.

It was a year of the superfluous, of living dangerously closer to the edge. I am talking about the peace process, Iraq, oil prices, Lebanon, shaky economies, Arab divisions, US hegemony and neo-colonial onslaughts, religious, social and cultural rifts, regional tensions...

That isn't to say that 1998 was particularly worse than previous years. Our region has been plagued for more than anyone cares to remember. There has always been a common denominator that collates the Arabs only to divide them once again.

In the forties it was foreign domination, the fifties gave rise to Israel and Nasserism, the sixties witnessed the collapse of the nationalist project and the usurpation of the rest of Palestine, including Jerusalem. The seventies ushered in the first Arab victory against Israel but paved the way to its recognition and the acceptance of its existence, the eighties started with Israel extending its regional omnipotence into Lebanon but ended with its humiliation at the hands of the children of the Intifada.

The eighties also witnessed the emergence of Iraq as an Arab regional force after a bloody war with Islamic Iran. And then came the nineties with Iraq blundering into Kuwait before surrendering to a crushing military alliance, followed by devastating sanctions. This gave way to the advent of the Madrid peace conference and its offspring.

The departure of colonial powers from our region coincided with the birth of Israel in

our midst and our resistance to this foreign body. But for 50 years, internal divisions and external conspiracies have eclipsed our resistance. The one common denominator for the Arabs in the past five decades has been to stand up for the Zionist project in Palestine. Ironically it ended up dividing the Arabs rather than uniting them.

But 1998 stands out as landmark in the retreat of Arab response to Zionism. The peace process is dead, replaced by a fluid situation where neither genuine peace nor its alternative is within reach. A sort of cancerous state of lethargy is spreading where comical albeit real-life situations are becoming the norm: a grossly lopsided balance of power between Israel and the Palestinians is the engine that powers a crooked political settlement that legitimizes Israel's occupation. The victim is now endorsing the aggression. Oslo and Wye have degraded Palestinian rights to the extent that a fragmented and unsustainable self-rule entity is now celebrated as the cornerstone of the future Palestinian state.

If the Palestinian question was, for decades, the core of Arab rallying and eventual disunity, today it is no more. Palestine is not even on the agenda, if there is one. The Palestinian issue is a detached one, exclusively American, Israeli and to some extent Palestinian. If Oslo managed to disjoin the Palestinian track from the rest of the peace negotiations, then Wye was able to remove it altogether from the common Arab concern. Today the fate of Palestine is not even a divisive issue for Arab governments.

On the other hand, Iraq has replaced Palestine as the common denominator. Since the Gulf War, the Iraqi issue has become the stumbling block on the road of recovering pan Arab concord. Iraq stands for two things today: the leadership of the oppressed Arab people, at least on the face of it, pan Arab sympathy, the former is seen as the embodiment of Arab disharmony and discord. This is a doctrine perpetuated by the Americans after the end of the Gulf War. In recent years, Arab governments have eagerly adopted such approach. The challenge is how, if possible, to separate the



Osama El-Sherif

two entities. How can Arabs lend support to removing the plight of the Iraqi people, while at the same time distance themselves from the misadventures of its leadership? How can this goal be achieved within the framework of a common Arab strategy, without appearing to be supporting the policies of London and Washington in containing and eventually dislodging the Iraqi leadership? The issue has become so complicated that finding a solution to the Iraqi question could very well herald the beginning of the healing process to the entire Arab order.

As the last days of 1998 unfold it seems certain that the elusive Arab summit remains just that. But then what can an Arab summit do? Will it unravel the Iraqi conundrum? Or will it put forward a way out for Libya, force an end to Algeria's bloodbath, salvage Sudan, rehabilitate Somalia, which by the way is an Arab country, and support the struggle of the Lebanese resistance?

Whether we accept it or not, there is a process of global and regional evolution that is taking place in spite of our lethargy and inactivity. In 1998 we have seen the reveries of the oil-rich Gulf states slashed by half. The trend is expected to continue while the Gulf states struggle to maintain their welfare societies. The post oil boom era will change economic, social and political realities and relationships in the Gulf basin and in the region as a whole. On our region's western borders, Paid-

stan and India were able to launch themselves into the nuclear club of nations. New pacts and alliances are now coming together, between Israel and Turkey, and lately between Russia and India.

This raises an important question. If common Arab approach to regional issues is no longer possible, then what is the alternative and what are the consequences? Israel and the United States have filled the vacuum left by the collapse of the Arab order in the aftermath of the Gulf War. Not a single Arab country today is able to create a power base for itself in the region. This is true of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf and of Egypt in North Africa and the Levant.

In any case 1998 was not a "populist" year, meaning it was not a year for the people. The causes of democracy, human rights and public freedoms have not advanced in the Arab world. It could be said that these causes suffered a setback in certain countries.

Still the average Arab citizen, if such a person exists, remains heavily politicized. He or she is probably addicted to Al Jazeera satellite station's controversial debates, is subliminally disgusted with his government and its policies and is subconsciously baffled by the intricate democratic procedures by Congress to impeach President Clinton!

At any rate there is a widening abyss between people and governments in the Arab world. It would be a miracle if a single Arab government was able to win a public mandate from its people in a free and honest election. Such dichotomy is not novel but has become entrenched in our political and cultural behavior. If 1998 proved anything for the political observer it was that Arab masses remain as romantic about their loyalty to the grand Arab dream as ever. We have seen this lately in the anti-American demonstrations that erupted in various Arab capitals from the Gulf to the Ocean. If Arab regimes have failed to rescue the Arab order at summit level, maybe there is still hope at the grassroots. Could 1999 shake away the lethargy and indifference that has driven us so excessively to the edge? ■

Middle East Beat
by Khairi Janbek
Dealing with Iraq

IT IS inevitable that—sooner or later—the world, UN, and the Security Council, will have to deal with Iraq on totally different basis. The existence of the Iraqi regime isn't a question anymore, neither the geographical unity of the country, nor the suffering millions of Iraqis caught up in the cruel game of nations.

The triangle of looking after the welfare of Iraqis while attempting to remove the country's president, and keeping the geographical unity of the country in tact are not only the main source of contradictory policies but are the major reasons of discord among the international community.

Conflicting interests and lack of a clear political vision are contributing to the absence of a paradigm shift towards Iraq. Misery remains the Iraqis' emblem of life.

If we disconnect the circumstances surrounding the Iraqi dilemma, we could conclude that the whole thing is as simple as "bread and butter!" The threats of geographical dismemberment have been overplayed without any results, and the attempts to remove president Saddam have failed.

It's time to consider the human dimension of the crisis. The issue has been ignored up till now because of the obvious implications connected to the sanctions regime, but then again the international community can neither claim saving the Iraqi people from their enslavement, nor in helping them put up with it.

New steps must be taken into consideration to deal with the situation. It must be made clear once again, at least to remind ourselves, that the objectives of the international community are to lift the sanctions on Iraq and not the other way round. This has to go beyond the usual rhetoric, and more towards positive attitudes. A credible bilateral relationship has to be established once again between the Iraqi leadership and the UN. And Iraq has to understand that international legality will be imposed, and the UN must realize finally that Iraq needs a time frame for ending this political stigma.

In this respect, surveillance of the Iraqi military industry will have to continue, but the nature and structure of this procedure must change. After all, the Iraqi quarrel is not with cameras and electronic equipment, but rather with UNSCOM and its head Richard Butler.

It may still be worth-while to attempt saving Iraq from itself, and every be convenient if Butler retires gracefully, and the structure of UNSCOM expanded to include members from the Islamic and Arab worlds. This would be a step to establish a firm basis of objectivity, and act as catalyst for reconciliation in the event of any emerging friction with Iraq. This can be achieved through the efforts of the Organization of Islamic States and the Arab League rather than by individual Arab countries.

This could allow the former organization to find a sense of direction, and the latter, an opportunity to redeem itself. There is no creation without responsibility, it is time we stop pretending that Iraq is not really our concern, and that we can continue to get away with it by occasional condemnations only.

Eventually, Iraq would save itself from the impending disasters of sanctions.

Likewise, Amman with its traditional good links with Baghdad, can host a new type of institution which would supervise Iraq's commercial dealings with the outside world. This institution would represent the concerns of the international community as well as those of the Arab and Islamic countries. Through sound and efficient Jordanian banking practices, the supervision of Iraq import-export business can be monitored effectively until such time Iraq can stand on its own feet again. ■

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Foxes straying in the desert

The Superman complex

To The Editor,

An Egyptian friend makes it a point to send me articles regarding the US policy in the Middle East. Naturally he has had plenty of material lately, including your article "Foxes straying in the desert: America's legacy of hate," The Star 24 December. I think you misuse the word hate. I think desperation is better. If you set aside the questionable idea that the US gets involved in things like Desert Storm/Desert Fox to protect our source of Middle Eastern oil, try to look at the situation from an American point of view.

The US feels like it should be the world's referee. It's a very American idea dating back to the beginning of this century (before we were a "superpower") that we are morally responsible for making the world a safe and just place for all. We just can't help ourselves: If there is a trouble-maker out there in the world somewhere, we just have to write our hands and worry over it. Somehow we just take it to be our role to preach against the world's injustices.

You can look at our complaints about Chinese or Burmese human rights. What's the advantage to the US of making noise about that?

Of course, there are often cases where this moral righteousness happens to coincide with some other and more concrete issue. Then we act, for example in Panama. But it's the character of America to see itself as Superman, defending the planet from lawlessness and injustice.

I can't say that America always picks the right side to defend, but we do make a loyal ally. (Ask any Briton, Israeli or almost any Saudi.)

The deal with Iraq and Desert Fox is that Saddam made a deal with the UN and he won't honor it. For whatever reason, the US takes this personally and after a dozen rounds of negotiations, and at a politically crazy time here, we test our latest cruise missile technology. You will say that is over-simplified, but I am mainly writing to tell you that most Americans who support the Desert Fox operation basically believe that.

I don't ever support dropping bombs and I am personally quite a pacifist, but what would happen if we didn't? It seems to me that if it's all right by everyone within Scud missile range of Iraq

that Saddam build back up his WMDs (I had not heard that before; nice abbreviation!), then that's up to you.

One last point before I wish you a peaceful fast and a happy new year. Whenever my friend sends me articles like this, I seldom see any constructive suggestions. What would you do if you were Bill Clinton's most trusted advisor? (That's an easy target for a joke, isn't it?) But I would be interested in the alternatives you or other voices from the Middle East would suggest. We're generally no more like Bill Clinton (or George Bush...) than the average Iraqi is like Saddam Hussein. Most of us are not filled with hate towards any Arabs at all.

Carl Godkin
carl@gdi.com

War driven by greed

To The Editor,

I am a middle class American who lives in NYC and I have great sympathy for Third World countries who have become the victims of US power and greed.

That's what it really comes down to not hate just plain greed. Most Americans seem to be in a trance which is fed by the media and the routine and comforts of their lives.

This is a war declared by big business and the people who make arms. America needs some way to justify its military and arms budget. And the only way to do it is to make an excuse to use them. Saddam just fits the bad guy personality and the Middle East initially asked for help not to mention all the oil. Iraq is the perfect victim.

I believe most Americans were frightened by the bombing of Iraq, especially in NYC where we feel vulnerable to retaliation. As much as the media is saying, Americans are behind the president both in his personal crisis and his decision to attack Iraq, most people I know are tired in have to listen to details about Clinton's personal life and do not have much trust in his political decisions.

All the details that have added to this situation: Monica, impeachment, Saddam, Osama Bin Laden, all these details just side track us from the real motives of this war which I believe to be caused by the greed of people who make weapons of mass destruction which America seem to be in the lead of producing.

I don't really know how to end this letter, nor do I know why I have written it, but perhaps it gives you some understanding that not all Americans are in

favour of this war, nor do we feel that the US is the good guy in all of this.

P.Squillari
P.Squillari@aol.com

Not a question of hate

To The Editor,

I am a student in the middle of America, I don't belong to any religion, and I don't know of a single person who hates any of you. On the other hand, we think you hate us. A country and its government are not the same thing. For you or for us the same applies. Decisions are made and we are not consulted or ever told about these decisions. I suspect the same is true for you.

Gig -gig@uwest.net-

Punishing Iraq

To The Editor,

It would appear to me that you have once again proven the point of many a person across the globe: you are simply another of the pawns in a greater struggle, regurgitating the rhetoric that the government of Iraq tells to its people; lying to them and perpetuating the hate and violence that has plagued the latter half of this century. In your article you state "What was Operation Desert Fox all about? How was it different from previous military campaigns against Iraq, like Desert Storm and Desert Shield?" Do you remember what Desert Storm was all about? Iraq invaded a rather helpless Kuwait and committed the same types of atrocities you keep trying to pin on the United States and Britain.

When the UN was asked to help, they did and made a mockery out of the Iraqi military. The Iraqi people need to realize that they are a defeated nation. If the Iraqi government would simply cooperate, there would be no need for such bloodshed the likes of which occurred during Operation Desert Storm. Instead, Iraq has decided to become the punished child who refuses to be punished; and only gets hit harder the next time around. You also stated that "America's legacy is tons of hate injected into young Arab generations for everything it stands for." Maybe Iraq should step back a bit, stop burning the American flag, and ask themselves how much of this horrible violence they are bringing on themselves.

JP Mulvey
jpmmv@hotmail.com

Business scene

Over JD 82.3 million of shares were purchased by non-Jordanians in the Amman Financial Market last November. The amount has increased by about 7.23 percent from October, foreign purchasing was estimated at JD 10 million. The net foreign investment at the AFM last month was raised further to JD 73 million.

The Jordan Society for Fruit and Vegetables (JSFV) requested a formation of a new five-year plan (1999-2003) for social and economic development. In that respect, the government is already working on the formation of a new five-year plan (1999-2003) for social and economic development.

The number of branches of Jordanian banks has increased to 448 in the Kingdom. According to a recent report issued by the Jordan Banks Association, only 12 branches were opened in 1997, in addition to more than 16 banking offices. The Housing Bank came first in the report with 113 branches in Jordan and abroad, whilst the Jordan Ahli Bank was next with 46 branches.

Jordan is safe from high-level radioactivity. A recent study made by the Nuclear Energy Department at the Ministry of Energy, showed that radioactivity in Jordan is within normal limits. The study covered about 45 areas all over the Kingdom.

An agreement was signed last week between the Royal Scientific Society and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The agreement will increase bilateral cooperation between the two institutions in the field of regional systems engineering. The duration of the agreement is three years.

A new industry chamber will be established in Irbid next month. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has fixed 11 January as the date for elections of the first board of the chamber. The board is expected to include nine members, representing over 24 industrial institutions in the city.

Over 75,000 passengers traveled to Aqaba and Tel Aviv on Royal Wings in 1998. The figure has increased by 10 percent on last year. Ahmed Qantar, general director of Royal Wings, said that the company will operate 14 weekly flights to Aqaba and eight weekly flights to Tel Aviv. Mr. Qantar estimates that his company will carry over 100,000 passengers next year.

Foreign Exchange		
Wednesday, 30 December 1998		
	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
Sfr	0.4801	0.4825
HK\$	0.1227	0.1233
Yen	0.5624	0.5652
DM	0.3667	0.3685
LYD	0.0419	0.0421

A new development plan promises a better future

By Ghassan Joha
Star Staff Writer

AS THE world rushes towards the new millennium, likewise the international economy is becoming a top priority in many countries.

to promote the well-being of societies. And Jordan is no different, presently promoting its economic policies in preparation for the new millennium.

In that respect, the government is already working on the formation of a new five-year plan (1999-2003) for social and economic development.

The plan by the Ministry of Planning focuses on the main future aspects of the economy to prepare the country for the coming challenges in the next century.

The main objectives of the plan is to promote economic development in line with the increasing population. It also stresses on building the national reserve of labor, providing equal opportunities, promoting the legal framework and the work of institutions with control over the economic process, and establish a national free market.

The government is also considering of reevaluating the work force in the labor market taking into account the educational and vocational backgrounds of workers. This would also involve the distribution of wages and bonuses more fairly.

The first strategy of the Plan is the financial policy. The government hopes to promote the taking system to improve investment and save long-winded procedures for individuals. Liberalization and commit-

ment to quality will also be another official concern as privatizing public institutions will continue to give hand for the private sector in managing the national economy. However, other policies will take trade agreements, statistics, vocational training and administrative reforms into account, to rectify the transaction cost of national production.

But such an attempt could not be done without developing the current standards and modifications of public institutions. These standards can only be implemented hand in hand with developed educational and training structures which require a continuous review and up-to-date standards.

On the social level, the plan insures the development of a national structure to fairly distribute aid to the poor and unemployed. The plan also urges the government to form what it calls, a financial fund for the poor to assist them with vocational training in a step to reduce unemployment and finding competitive opportunities among small economic groups.

Since the population rate in Jordan is one of the highest in the world, the plan suggests a new policy that would educate the public on the need to decrease natural growth by 0.1 percent each year.

The plan also calls for opening about 250 new job opportunities to bring unemployment down to 10 percent by the year 2003.

The economic-led plan urges on securing financial and social infrastructures. These installations will cover over 320 areas in the Kingdom and would

expanding the products to an additional six percent and preserve national savings, decrease the economic deficit and promote economic investments.

However, the plan shows that domestic consumption will decrease from 90.8 percent in 1998 to 88 percent of the GDP in 2003. But public consumption will increase from JD 1335 million in 1998 to JD 1400 million.

Investment, moreover, is expected to increase as long as national capital and the promotion of vocational talent, is encouraged.

According to the 1999 budget, investment could be promoted by increasing the role of the private sector and expanding privatization: by the year 2003 investment is expected to reach JD 418 million.

One of the changes that the new plan is promising to make is to promote the trade and services balance, as well as reducing the foreign debt.

Since Jordan is expected to join the World Trade Organization by the year 2000, and in addition to the signed free trade agreements with Egypt and the European Union, total national exports is expected to increase from JD 1330 million in 1998 to JD 1954 million in 2003, while imports will increase to JD 4000 million in that year.

The service index, on the other hand, comprises travel

and tourism, transport, current accounts and payment orders. The plan hopes to reduce public deficit in obtaining services and goods to JD 196 million in 2003 from JD 295 million this year.

This, of course, depends on the positive developments of tourism and travel in the Middle East as Jordan is expected to become an attraction for tourists within the next few years.

According to official rates, foreign tourism and travel expenses into Jordan will increase by 12 percent, from JD 253 million in 1998 to JD 444 million in 2003.

The same goes for transport and banking sectors. The upgrading of regional and international trade exchange will promote these to more than JD 100 million in year 2003, a 16 percent increase on 1998. And deficit on banking accounts is also due to be reduced because of increased investment and banking orders from Jordanian expatriates.

Furthermore, foreign debts are expected to slow down from 97.6 percent of the GDP in 1998 to 62 percent by the end of this plan, depending on the rescheduling of these debts and increasing public investment.

Last but not least, the new economic and social development plan is a new interesting and supportive step to promote the various prospects of Jordan's economy, and would seem to be promising as long as it is implemented with prudence and credibility.

Since the population rate in Jordan is one of the highest in the world, the plan suggests a new policy that would educate the public on the need to decrease natural growth by 0.1 percent each year

Asia's middle class shrinks as many descend into poverty

By Evelyn Iritani

BANGKOK (Thailand)—Even as the economic storms from Asia seem to subside, the region's middle class—root of the "Asian miracle"—and heir to the supposed Pacific Century—is shrinking by the tens of millions and sinking into poverty.

Instead of inheriting a legacy of global economic supremacy, a generation of Asians find themselves trapped in an urban middle-class nightmare of declining wages, rising prices and dashed expectations.

Much as the Great Depression left its mark on a generation of Americans, the financial collapse that began here 18 months ago is changing behavior, political beliefs and aspirations from Thailand to Indonesia to South Korea.

Two decades of growth and an estimated 25 million jobs will be lost to this economic cataclysm, whose shock waves have reverberated as far away as Russia and Brazil.

In a new assessment of the damage, the World Bank estimates that by the year 2000, more than 50 million people will fall into poverty in the five hardest-hit Asian countries: Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. That would double the number of poor in those countries. "It is clear that changes wrought by last year's events in Asia will be as intense as those brought on by the Great Depression of the 1930s for Europe and North America," the World Bank says.

And like the Depression, which sowed the seeds for the political upheaval in Europe that led to World War II, this downturn has bred an explosive mixture of disillusionment and anger.

Confronted by a well-educated and increasingly restive populace, four governments—in Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia—already have been thrown from power. "When you look at the political unrest, the primary source is the middle class, not the poorest or the wealthiest," says James Castle, head of the Jakarta, Indonesia-based Castle Group, a prominent consulting company.

Yet political turmoil merely reflects a broader, deeper and more long-lasting change in attitude and outlook whose ultimate shape is not yet known. George Yeo, Singapore's minister of arts and culture, calls it a "defining communal experience for Asians across culture and national boundaries."

It has been a barely imaginable reversal for young profes-

sionals such as Chaovalit Tain-sawan, who came of age during East Asia's golden years, a period of unprecedented growth that lifted about 375 million people out of poverty.

Laid off this fall from a manager's job at a Bangkok electronics company, Chaovalit is applying for a lowly technician's post at a fraction of his previous salary. Even if he gets the job, he has lost ground; the prodigious savings habits of Asians like him are all that stand between them and the bottom.

Instead of buying Christmas gifts this season, he dipped into his savings to cover the mortgage. "I'm just trying to save any extra money I get," said Chaovalit, 36, who measures the economic decline in his upscale suburban housing complex by the sea of "For Sale" signs. For those negatively affected by the economic downturn, the region's social safety nets are, by Western

standards, virtually nonexistent. Asian governments traditionally have eschewed welfare or employment programs, able to rely instead on the region's dramatic economic expansion of the last two decades to keep jobless rates low. Families also were expected to take care of their own.

Although all the hard-hit Asian governments are under pressure to step in—and agencies such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank are dramatically beefing up—their aid efforts are aimed at helping the poorest of the poor. The newly disenfranchised middle class is on its own.

South Korea is the only country offering unemployment benefits, which it recently extended to nine months, but those funds only reach a fraction of those without jobs.

Many South Korean men who lose their jobs are so ashamed that they keep up the

employment myth by putting on their business suits every morning and wandering around Seoul.

"Over 80 percent of Koreans believed they were middle class. Now there's almost no middle class," said Lee Si Hyung, director of the Korea Institute of Social Psychiatry at Kangbuk Samsung Hospital.

The Thai and Indonesian governments have counted on farming to absorb some of the urban jobless. Some farmers have gotten a boost from their currency devaluations, which lowered production prices and opened new export markets.

But Cornell University professor Iwan Jaya Aziz, who studied recent migration patterns in Asia, said many of those who returned to their villages early in the crisis were not able to find work. One reason is the shift in recent years from labor-intensive family farms to large corporate plantations that require fewer

workers.

Unable to find jobs in the cities or on the farms, many Asian professionals and skilled workers are setting up sidewalk stalls to sell food or cheap goods.

The middle class has taken the brunt of the currency and stock market collapse in part because the biggest job losses have taken place in white-collar industries such as banking, real estate and retailing.

According to Cornell's Aziz, they tend to be city dwellers, who are also more vulnerable to rising prices caused by the sharp devaluation of their currencies because more of their goods and services are denominated in dollars, according to Aziz and others.

The experience has been especially jolting because Asia's middle class had become enthusiastic participants in the consumer economy that flourished in the last two decades, fed by foreign capital and the

proceeds of overheated stock and real estate markets.

In less than a generation, Asia's upwardly mobile moved from the fields to the office, quickly embracing the lifestyles of the industrialized West.

Between 1975 and 1995, the number of people living in poverty in East Asia dropped from 720 million to 345 million, according to the World Bank. These newly middle-income wage-earners often sent their children abroad for schooling, obtained loans for homes, automobiles and motorcycles, and became the world's most voracious consumers of everything from cell phones to cocaine.

Now, those lucky enough to still have jobs are getting squeezed by drastic cutbacks in their incomes and soaring interest rates on consumer loans, as well as rising prices on basic necessities like rice and fuel, which have skyrocketed in countries like Indonesia, where

government subsidies were eliminated.

As the crisis drags on, Asian families—among the world's most prodigious savers—are rapidly going through their nest eggs. In Indonesia, the percentage of income devoted to savings has dropped by nearly half and redemptions of life insurance policies have increased more than 40 percent since last year, according to Jakarta-based consultant Castle.

These are the kinds of experiences that molded a generation of frugal Americans in the 1930s, and the Asian crisis will likely have the same effect. "It will color their habits for the rest of their lives," Castle said.

"They will be less secure in their future, even in good times, and much more conservative even in their savings habits," he added.

LA Times-washington Post News Service

The brave new world of Euroland

By Anne Swardson

PARIS—More than 17 centuries after the Romans attempted to establish one currency for all of Europe, 11 European nations are poised to take a momentous leap of faith once again that monetary union will transform the continent into an economic superpower.

On New Year's Day, Germany, France, Italy and eight other countries will begin merging their currencies into a new money called the euro. The merger won't mean the end of marks, francs, lire and the other national currencies until 2002, when euro coins and bank notes make their debut. But as of Friday, the 11 currencies will be immediately—and irrevocably—linked to one another and to the untested euro, and the look and feel of daily commerce across the continent will be fundamentally altered.

If it works as designed, this massive undertaking—in its scale and scope the most complex economic transformation ever attempted—will create a truly unified economic zone for the first time in European history.

To the dreamers of Europe, the single currency also is a step toward the more illusory, and contentious, goal of political unification. While a politically united continent remains a distant dream, proponents think



A man on an overhead walkway in Paris's Marche St Honoré, passes large illuminated balloons 29 December, each representing the European currencies which will take part in the launch of Europe's single currency January 1. The balloons are outside the headquarters of the French financial institution "Paribas" and the currencies represented on the balloons pictured are: Irish Pound, Italian Lire, The Euro, Finnish Mark and Spanish Peseta.

the single currency will help Europeans put aside their linguistic, cultural and political differences and become a global economic rival to the United States.

"When we look back at this time 100 years from now, we will find this was a step of historic proportions," said Ulrich Cautelieri, a member of the

supervisory board of Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt. "There may be hiccups, there may be problems, but it still will lead to a fantastic economic dynamism in Europe."

The enterprise begins Friday, the day after finance ministers from 11 of the European Union's 15 members—Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Ger-

many, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain—give final approval to the exchange values between their currencies and the euro. EU members Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Greece, at least initially, will not take part.

The move to the euro will be an odd transformation because the first stage of European Mon-

etary Union does not involve cash. The 290 million citizens of Euroland, as the single currency zone has been dubbed, have until 2002 before they begin paying for their baguettes and Sacher tortes in euro cash.

Even so, the real economic transition happens now. On New Year's Day, the 11 national currencies essentially become subdivisions of the euro. The French franc will be more accurately described as 0.15 euros, the German mark as a half-euro, the Irish pound as 1.25 euros. The new European Central Bank and its 17-member governing council will assume monetary authority now held by 11 national central banks, deciding on interest rates and inflation policy for all Euroland members.

Monetary union will have a swift impact on finance ministries, board rooms and trading floors around the world as the single currency takes its place alongside the dollar and yen as a global unit of exchange.

When business resumes after the New Year's holiday weekend, all stock prices in the 11 countries will be quoted in euros, as will all government borrowings. Banks, brokerage houses and other financial institutions will operate in two currencies, the euro and their national currency. Tens of thousands of employees of financial institutions across the continent

plan on working right up until the start of the first trading day to complete what has been a herculean task of adapting computer software programs to convert stock shares, bonds, deposits and loans into euros in time for the markets' opening bell on 4 January.

The effects of the transformation will spread through every level of European business and society.

A Belgian food wholesaler buying Spanish tomatoes, for example, will no longer have to worry about an increase in the value of the peseta raising the price he must pay in Belgian francs. A Dutch investor deciding whether to buy shares in Fiat can look at the company's bottom line without worrying about whether a devalued lira will dilute his dividends.

A Finnish family planning a trip to Germany can compare fares on Lufthansa and Finnair with ease.

When added to the EU's near-nonexistent border controls, currency union will ease travel and commerce for millions of people. "We'll be able to move about Europe just as we now take the Metro," said Casey Stannett, 32, a Paris lawyer who travels extensively for business and pleasure.

LA—Washington Post News Service

A View from America A tiger by its tail

By Carrie Nelle Moyer

WHAT DOES one do when s/he catches a tiger by the tail? Surely the US finds itself in this situation presently. And lest there be any question in anyone's mind, s/he must not have been listening to the news of late. For most surely Saddam Hussein is a tiger and most surely the US—yet again—has grabbed the tiger's tail. And the tiger is striking back.

Over the years the relationship between Iraq and the United States has waxed and waned, depending on the existing political climate. Since 1991, of course, it has more than waxed: it has vacillated between belligerence and bordering-on-belligerence.

The US, under the auspices of the UN, has threatened and Iraq has retaliated. Then Iraq has stepped over the agreed upon line and the US has bared its teeth. And even bitten. Then Saddam has pledged his word yet again. And the US has believed him yet again.

Same story, fifty-eighth verse: Saddam has broken his pledge, after having declared numerous times he has defeated the US once more. But this time he went further. This time he dared the US to fly over Iraqi skies and fly we did. The tiger snarled and bit.

Some sage must devise a reasonable scenario such that these two powers coexist. And yes, Iraq is a power in its own way. Certainly it is a power over its own people, with most not being willing participants in its inner machinations. And yes, Iraq is a power in the world of oil. For lay sanctions as we may, those in power in Iraq will ever be able to get what they desire and circumvent sanctions as needed. And we all thought the big problem in the Middle East was the Israeli-Palestinian question. But there are other tigers.

Presently there is no way US foreign policy can devote as much mind-power to "peace" in the Middle East as is needed for we must be so acutely tuned in to the actions of Saddam Hussein. If that were not enough of a diversion, we must be mindful of what Syria is doing.

Ah yes, Syria. The once Sly Fox of the Middle East, Hafez Al Assad, has been mighty quiet of late. Indeed, most folks thought he would have died by now, what with numerous reports of grave heart problems back in the 1980s. Yet he remains a force with which we must be very careful. Never count this man out. And oh, what strange bedfellows politics do indeed make. Al Assad, usually a firm opponent of Saddam, has not taken kindly to the latest actions of the US vis-a-vis Iraq. There have been huge gatherings of Syrians protesting our actions in Iraq.

We—the US, that is—seem to have taken the mantle of Police of the World, whether by choice or by circumstance. If this is the case, we have a most unenviable task and perhaps an impossible one. Can we concentrate on peace between the Israelis and Palestinians while having to contend with Saddam and Al Assad? Who remembers Bosnia (except for those military families who have loved ones there)? How significant is the virtual collapse of Asian economies to our own? And what do we do about it. Oops, and I just about forgot. Our President has been impeached. Where does that fit in?

How about the following:
■ Censure the President. Have him plead mea culpa fifty times (once for each state so no one will feel left out), then let him turn to (real) domestic and foreign policies.

■ Have him meet with Pentagon leaders as well as the heads of the armed forces committees in the House and Senate and examine our relationship with Iraq. Or rather, Saddam Hussein. Make a decision and stick with it.

■ Meet with Arafat and Netanyahu (or his successor) and tell them once and for all both sides (must) adhere to the Wye Plantation agreements (do not get involved in the semantics of Camp David, Oslo, and all the others) and ask if both sides want us to serve as the enforcer. If the answer is yes, then do so, in a purely unbiased manner.

■ Abide by the UN, World Court, and NATO decisions regarding Central and Eastern Europe. If not, give the UN the teeth to implement its decisions and turn this matter over to the world body.

■ I've always felt Alan Greenspan has far too much power. But thus far his judgment has been good for the US. Why not give him a go at least in (offering) advice to the powers-that-be in the wildly fluctuating Asian economies.

The only way to handle a tiger held by the tail is to turn loose, turn around and face the tiger head on. It will be unpleasant but is there any better solution?

And then there is the question of birth, not death, as in the octuplets in Texas. But that's another column. ■

Begin's son quits Likud to challenge Netanyahu

By Rebecca Trounson

JERUSALEM—Joining a growing list of challengers to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the son and political heir of Likud Party founder Menachem Begin announced Monday that he is quitting the Likud to mount a right-wing bid for prime minister.

The challenge by Zeev Benjamin Begin, 55, a veteran lawmaker who has been an unyielding opponent of Israel's land-for-peace accords with the Palestinians, could split the support for Netanyahu in elections now scheduled for May 17.

Legislators from the Likud and Labor parties agreed on the tentative date Monday, a week after Israel's parliament signaled the end of Netanyahu's tumultuous government with an overwhelming vote for early national elections. The date is expected to gain final approval from a parliamentary committee Tuesday.

The elections would fall less than two weeks after a May 4 deadline set by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood if a final settlement with Israel has not been reached. The timing suggests that any statement or action by Arafat will become a key factor in the race.

Selection of the mid-May date also confirms that there will be a protracted period in which Israel will have a care-

taker government, essentially freezing the peace process.

Already, Netanyahu's handling of peacemaking with the Palestinians was certain to be at the heart of the campaign.

Begin said it was the prime minister's signature on the US-brokered Wye River agreement with the Palestinians that triggered his decision to form a new far-right party and challenge Netanyahu. The accord, signed October 23 at the White House, made Netanyahu the first right-wing Israeli leader to agree to transfer a sizable chunk of the West Bank to the Palestinians.

It has been bitterly opposed by nationalists, rightists and religious leaders who believe the West Bank is part of the biblical Land of Israel, or that the Palestinians cannot be trusted to make peace.

In a Tel Aviv news conference, the tough-talking Begin on Monday equated Arafat's Palestinian Authority with the militant Islamic Hamas movement, and said the two groups shared a "strategic understanding."

"There are only two possibilities today," he said. "Either we are dragged down the road—down the Wye River—and we give away more territory to these hoodlums, or we stand firm." Begin's chances of actually becoming prime minister are considered slim in an era when polls show that a consistent majority of Israelis support territorial compromise with the Palestinians. But he could

weaken Netanyahu by splitting the right-wing vote, analysts said.

Begin's decision to quit the Likud is the latest in a series of moves by party stalwarts to defect or mount challenges to Netanyahu from within. Their ranks include several members, like Begin, of the Likud aristocracy, whose fathers helped found the party and its ideological predecessor, the ultranationalist Herut Party.

Last week, another Likud "prince," Netanyahu's former Finance Minister Dan Meridor, announced that he would run for prime minister on a new centrist slate. A third, hard-line Likud lawmaker, Uzi Landau, said he would challenge Netanyahu for the party's leadership.

Two other senior Likud figures, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Communications Minister Limor Livnat, are reportedly debating whether to leave the party.

"It's a terrible blow for the Likud," said Haifa University political scientist Asher Arian. "When a number of key ministers and leaders walk out of a party, it's bound to make its voters question what's going on."

Begin, who served briefly as science minister in Netanyahu's government, quit after Netanyahu agreed in January 1997 to withdraw Israeli troops from most of the West Bank city of Hebron. He has been an outspoken critic since.

His father, the late Men-

chem Begin, was the Likud's first prime minister, serving from 1977 to 1983. The elder Begin reached the landmark Camp David accords with Egypt's Anwar Sadat in 1979, in which the Sinai peninsula was returned to Egypt, but did not support territorial concessions to the Palestinians.

Netanyahu on Monday denied that his support was disintegrating within the Likud, pointing to the broad backing for him over the weekend at a gathering of the party's central committee.

But Begin, a geologist who earned his doctorate in the United States before entering politics in 1988, said Netanyahu's policies had blurred the historic distinctions between Likud and Labor and were leading Israel to instability and violence.

In a telephone interview after his announcement, Begin expressed mild regret at leaving the party his father



One of Israel's aggressive attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank

founded. "It's a shame that we have arrived at this point, but I came to the conclusion that Mr. Netanyahu had a high chance of leading the so-called national camp to defeat in the

elections," he said. "I think a second candidate can give us a fair shot at winning."

LA—Washington Post News Service

Netanyahu's chief rival pulls out of Likud contest

By Judy Dempsey

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU increased his chances of being re-elected head of the Likud party and running for re-election as Israeli prime minister after one of his most influential challengers bowed out of the race.

Ehud Olmert, mayor of Jerusalem and Mr Netanyahu's long-term rival, decided not to run for the leadership after failing to enlist the support of Yitzhak Mordechai, the defence minister, a popular politician who wants to keep his political options open.

Mr Olmert's decision followed the defection from Likud of Dan Meridor, a former finance minister, to join a new centrist party with Amnon Lipton-Shahak, former chief of staff, and Roni Milo, former mayor of Tel Aviv. The trio hope to form a formidable alternative to both Likud and the opposition Labour party ahead of elections, whose date has still to be set.

Early elections were called last week after the Knesset (parliament) overwhelmingly opposed Mr Netanyahu's handling of the peace process with the Palestinians and

called for dissolution.

Mr Olmert's withdrawal from the leadership race was a significant blow to Netanyahu's unassailable position as far from united as the Likud party has ever been. It also ended the peace process with the Palestinians even accepting the principle of exchanging land for peace.

On the other side are hardline nationalists, bitterly opposed to Mr Netanyahu's decision to sign the Wye accord with the Palestinians last October in Washington. That camp is headed by Uzi Landau, a Likud veteran and chairman of the parliamentary foreign affairs and defence committee.

Yesterday Mr Landau announced that he was a candidate for the party leadership. But few Likud officials believe Mr Landau is charismatic or powerful enough to dislodge Mr Netanyahu.

For his part, Mr Netanyahu must convince the party he is the only one capable of beating Ehud Barak, opposition Labour party leader, for the premiership.

Opinion polls, however, tell a different story. Mr Netanyahu's zig-zagging on the peace process and his reputation for incon-

sistency has catapulted Mr Barak into the lead. The polls show 15 per cent still undecided and a third of about 4 per cent. But they put Mr Barak ahead of the prime minister for the first time, leading 45 per cent to 38 per cent in a second round vote for the premiership.

The five-nation group monitoring a ceasefire agreement in south Lebanon has blamed Israel and Hizbollah guerrillas for killing and wounding civilians. Reuters reports from Tyre.

The monitors said Israel had breached the agreement when it killed a woman and six of her children in a bombed air raid on the Bekaa Valley last Tuesday.

It also held pro-Iranian Hizbollah responsible for wounding 16 civilians and damaging civilian property when it fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel last Wednesday.

The monitoring group, with representatives from the US, Lebanon, Israel, Syria and France, was set up in 1996.

Financial Times Syndication



Olmert

Saddam, perhaps trying to raise the ante

By Howard Schneider

CAIRO—If there are any clues to why Iraq fired on American warplanes Monday in northern Iraq, they might be found in the comparative lack of resistance put up by the Iraqi military during four days of heavy bombardment last week.

After restricting his forces to a largely ineffective effort to shoot down cruise missiles with anti-aircraft guns during Operation Desert Fox, President Saddam Hussein may now be trying to show Iraqis and the world that he can still mount a response—a demonstration at least partly demanded by Iraq's internal politics.

Perhaps more importantly, he may also be starting to reveal how he plans to try to turn the US-led missile and bomb strikes, which ended 19 December, to his advantage. Far from compromising, his plan may be to keep pushing his dispute with the Middle East and the world to its limits, expecting that at some point the costs of enforcing sanctions, "no-fly" zones and other restrictions on Iraq will be seen as more trouble than they are worth.

"Saddam has a clear interest in showing he was not cowed by the air strikes and in raising the ante," said Patrick Clawson, director of research for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "And that is exactly what he is doing. He thinks that he can chip away at the restrictions and win some compromises."

Iraq's actions in the days since Operation Desert Fox ended have, in some ways, been as unpredictable as when the raids were underway. Over the weekend, Iraq reported incursions by hostile aircraft in southern Iraq, though both the British and Americans insisted no planes had been seen there at that time. And once before Monday's incident in the north, Western pilots in the southern no-fly zone reported seeing anti-aircraft fire in the distance.

At the same time, Saddam's government has refused to allow the United Nations to resume the weapons inspections required before international sanctions against Iraq can be lifted. Iraqi officials have threatened to halt the UN program under which their country can sell its oil to pay for food and medicine, and have given conflicting signals about the fate of the hundreds of UN humanitarian workers there who not only oversee that program but direct education,

health and nutrition projects. Since the bombing, Iraqi officials have given conflicting signals about whether those UN programs would be allowed to continue.

Though important to a country laboring under a stiff economic embargo, they are also regarded as an intrusion on its sovereignty and a sign of its inability to use its oil wealth as it chooses.

Ultimately, Saddam's goal is to have the eight-year-old sanctions lifted, an aim he promised last spring to fulfill by the end of this year.

While there is substantial sympathy, particularly among Arab countries, for finding some way to relax the embargo—a sentiment heightened by last week's bombings—Monday's incident near Mosul seemed to have little or no connection to that goal.

Rather, Clawson suggested, his more immediate aim may be to eliminate the no-fly zones.

Established by the Western allies after the Persian Gulf War to shield



Saddam

Iraq's Shiite Muslims in the south and its ethnic Kurds in the north, the zones have been only sporadically challenged by Iraq, allowing the West to keep them intact with minimal effort and danger.

Opposing US and British policing efforts with consistent anti-aircraft fire or by staging prohibited military flights would require a more sustained effort to enforce the no-fly rules—and raise the prospect of repeated missile strikes against Iraqi anti-aircraft bat-

teries or planes.

Given growing discomfort in the Arab world with an Iraqi policy that is viewed by some as punitive, that may be hard to justify. While the no-fly zones are supported by countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia with a vested interest in border security, they were instituted by the United States and a handful of allies, not by the United Nations or some other international body.

In countries like Egypt, Operation Desert Fox left many leaders calling for the United States and Britain not to take matters into their own hands, but to follow whatever policy is set by the UN Security Council.

The attacks may also, analysts suggested, be partly meant to bolster Saddam's stature with the Iraqi military after a missile attack to which they were largely unable to respond.

As the attack started, Baghdad newspapers took the unusual step of acknowledging that Iraq's inferior technology left its military vulnerable—a surprising admission in a country often adamant about insisting on the superiority of its culture to others.

LA Times—Washington Post News Service



An Iraqi street vendor sells baby food 28 December on a market in the northern Iraqi town of Mosul about 100 kms away from the Turkish border. Iraqi officials have denied reports that they would curtail the so-called "oil-for-food" deal with the UN and that it would ask UN relief staff to leave the country.

Reuters

Mozart industry trivializes composer's finer works

By Steve Metcalf

WHAT'S THE biggest challenge facing classical music? The decline of arts education? The rise of Celine Dion?

No, as troubling as those things are, there is a larger and more insidious threat out there. It's the Mozart Industry.

The Mozart Industry, not to be confused with the composer himself, is a sprawling multinational concern, with no identifiable headquarters. It manufactures not only merchandise but opinion. It traffics not only in concerts and festivals but also attitudes, quasi-scientific claims and even tones of voice.

And like many multinationals, it's out of control. In truth, I can live with the Mozart sweatshirts and coffee mugs, the watches and wall calendars, the hand-dipped chocolates, the greeting cards that play "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" when you open them, the ribbed all-cotton socks with Wolfgang's countenance in profile, the cocktail napkins featuring a reproduction of the manuscript to the "Elvira Madigan" Piano Concerto.

It's the way the music itself is being peddled that worries me. Music, at least for the time being, is still at the heart of the Mozart Industry. But Mozart's music is becoming over-exalted on the one hand and trivialized on the other.

On the over-exalted side, people are now required to talk about Mozart in a hushed, reverential tone formerly reserved for the major deities.

It has become obligatory to say, when mentioning Mozart, that he was the "greatest composer who ever lived," or better yet, the "greatest genius the world has ever known."

A few weeks ago, as I was driving near Boston, the announcer on the local public radio station, who had previously been talking more or less normally, said, "We turn now to the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart."

Mozart. There was such gravitas in the voice that I instinctively slowed down. My thoughts raced. It must be the Requiem. Maybe somebody has died.

When the music started up, it turned out to be one of his little divertissements. A pleasant trifle. But the idea that Mozart can sometimes be merely diverting, much less trifling, is blasphemy to the senior management of the Mozart Industry.

The problem with over-exalting Mozart is that ordinary people, trying mightily to form some kind of relationship with classical music, get confused. If they hear a piece of Mozart—a crisp little early symphony, say, or modest chamber piece—and they do not find themselves immediately prostrated by a sense of divine otherness, they feel



secretly ashamed and inadequate. There's a hidden message to this music, they fear, and they don't get it. Bulletin to the uninitiated: There's no secret message. It's OK to listen to Mozart and remain standing. It's even OK to find some of Mozart's music—

steady, now—uninteresting.

Meanwhile, things are even weirder on the flip side of the Mozart Industry, the trivializing side.

In brief, Mozart is now increasingly being sold as an aid to a more efficient and productive life, like St. John's Wort or the Ab-Flex. He makes us (and especially our children) smarter. He gives us, according to our needs, more serenity, more energy, deepened powers of concentration, better sleep.

The CDs in the bins tell the story: ■ "Mozart for Mothers to Be." This is intended for pregnant moms. The tone here is quiet and comforting, like a Lamaze class: "Studies show your baby will love this soothing serenade."

■ "Baby Needs Mozart." This is a more aggressive lip-smack to the same theme, designed to create a sense of shame among mothers-to-be who would deny their progeny the full range of Mozart benefits. "Give your little one a head start—in life and at school," it says, daring you to gamble with your child's future by playing him the wrong music.

■ Growups can get in on this action. "Tune Your Brain With Mozart," adapted from the book by Elizabeth Miles, promises that all of us, even "busy professionals," can use Mozart to "prepare for peak performance."

There is a Mozart disc to massage a loved one by. Another to have a dinner party by. Another just to wake up to.

Hovering behind these discs is the 1997 book (three accompanying CDs are available) called "The Mozart Effect." This breezy piece of New Age

demis-science, written by Don Campbell, has become one of the main texts of the Mozart Industry.

To be fair, the book makes a good case for the power of music. Music, Campbell shows, may indeed be able to heal and uplift and even "warm up your brain" in ways that conventional science and medicine are only starting to understand. But there isn't much here to support the proposition that Mozart is uniquely capable of producing these results. It may well be, as Campbell suggests, that a rich mixture of counterpoint and harmony and melody and organizational architecture may be required to achieve maximum benefits. But can Mozart really have been the only composer in all of history to have successfully blended these elements?

The thing is, there is some emerging research out there that really does make a case for music as a stimulant to certain kinds of mental activity.

The widely publicized (though hysterically over-interpreted) study done in the early 1990s at the University of California at Irvine, in which student test scores went up after listening to Mozart, is an intriguing door-opener to further research.

And only last month, at the meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, researchers suggested that listening to and performing music may enlarge certain areas of the brain, which is evidently desirable.

But again, the idea that Mozart is uniquely associated with these properties is like saying that reading is good for the imagination, but only if it's Proust.

It's worth mentioning that the deification of Mozart is a relatively recent development.

Even well into this century, many composers and critics placed him in the second or third tier of composers, well behind, say, Bach or Beethoven. And some Mozart works that today are regarded as sacred texts were virtually ignored for more than a century.

I don't want to give the wrong impression. Mozart was indeed, for lack of any better way to understand it, a divine phenomenon. Many of the works he crammed into his 35 years do have an unearthly perfection to them. But among Mozart's 600-odd pieces there are some compositions that are merely pleasant. And a few more that are, let's admit, tedious.

And it's no disservice to Mozart acknowledge that other composers, too, have been fortunate enough over the years to knock out the occasional piece of uplifting or mentally stimulating music.

In short, by chronically overselling its man, the Mozart Industry actually sells him out.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

War books of the year

By Christian Tyler

WAR, AND the threat of war, have been a dominant theme of the century. No wonder that at the century's end historians have been flocking to the front line.

For the recent 80th anniversary of the armistice which ended the first world war, the military historian John Keegan produced a magnificent general account, *The First World War*. Whether describing the complexities of pre-war diplomacy or rather the lack of it or the shock of the battle itself, Keegan's writing is superb: sane, trustworthy, vivid and deeply felt.

By its sweep and detail this history brilliantly conveys why this was, for Europe, the determining event of the age.

As a counterpoint, Lyn Macdonald produced the seventh of her chronicles of the same war, *To the Last Man*. Hers is a parallel-level view of General Ludendorff's last

throw, the great assault which drove a wedge between the British and French armies but which, for lack of men and morale, marked the beginning of the end for the German army.

The crucial battle of the second world war was widely seen as a prolongation of the first was Stalingrad, the city on the west bank of the Volga where Hitler's long advance to the east was finally checked and reversed by winter, disease and the superhuman resilience of the Red Army. Anthony Beevor, another military historian, met a long-felt want with his deservedly successful Stalingrad: *The Fatal Siege*.

Hitler's home war against his own people, and his systematic murder of millions of innocent civilians have been analyzed as much as any event this century. A striking addition to the literature, however, was Victor Klemperer's diary of the years 1933-41, newly translated into English, *I Shall Bear Witness*. Klemperer was a Protestant Jew married to an "Aryan" wife, Eva. His precise, didactic voice conveys what it was like to watch the world go mad.

An unusual war book which got forgotten in the rush was Gerald Howson's *Arms For Spain: The Unfinished Story of the Spanish Civil War*. Howson was the extraordinary personalities and stratagems involved in the supply of weaponry to both sides in the conflict.

He claims to have proved that the Republican government, facing a "wall of black-mail" in 30 countries, got far less material than the rebel Nationalists at far higher prices. Even the USSR defrauded its friends, by manipulating the exchange rate in its favor.

Mention should also be made of Noel Malcolm's *Kosovo: Short History*, which this year followed his similar history of Bosnia

and went into paperback last month.

Away from the smoke of battle, the year saw several compendious histories more adapted to reference than reading. One was Arthur Marwick's *The Sixties*, an almost nostalgic account of that tumultuous yet innocent decade, based on contemporary sources in four countries. Did Courtesans invent the mini-skirt, or was it Mary Quant? The answer is here.

Another big work was Stephen Inwood's definitive *A History of London*, but for an atmosphere of late medieval London. Peter Ackroyd's biography of Thomas More himself remains enigmatic to the modern mind, the character of the city itself is wonderfully evoked.

City life in Greece of the 5th century BC is the subject of Christian Meier's Athens, translated from the German for the American market this year and to be published in the UK next year by John Murray. A professional

classicalist described the book, despite its well-worn subject, as "a revelation."

No other account so effectively weaves the political and military material into the social and cultural. The lack of references was a weakness, as was the poor quality of otherwise well-chosen illustrations.

Finally, two historical biographies from the British 18th century.

Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire by Amanda Foreman has been the toast of the town. This is an old-fashioned biography in the benign sense of

the word, including everything you ever wanted to know about the ton, from their means to their politics.

There are striking parallels between Georgiana Spencer and her descendant Diana. Both had a charismatic charm, a tendency to ostentation, and suffered self-doubt and eating disorders. Both married an older man with an awkward social manner and a mistress. Georgiana became a celebrity eclipsing her husband, and was driven by frustration to gambling and exhibitionism.

My last nomination is Robert Harvey's *Clive: The Life and Death of a British Emperor*. Clive had invented Britain's Indian empire by the time he was 35, and would have been sent to stop the loss of the American empire had he thought it intelligent and had he not found himself the most hated man in the kingdom. Written in the style of a historical novel of imagined scenes and feelings, Harvey's book opens melodramatically with a furtive burial after dusk, and concludes by casting doubt on the two commonest versions of his death. Was it an accidental overdose of laudanum, as officially reported, or an improbably inefficient suicide, executed by means of a very small penknife?

Financial Times Syndication

Staying healthy, and safe, through the winter months

By Korky Vann

To make sure you stay healthy and safe through spring, start preparing now for the ice and snow to come.

Taking steps to prevent both indoor and outdoor falls is the best place to start. The National Institute on Aging says falls are the most common cause of fatal injury in older adults. Each year thousands of senior men and women are disabled, sometimes permanently, by falls that result in broken bones and other injuries. Lindsay Appel, director of rehabilitation for Masonic Geriatric Health Care Center in Wallingford, Conn., says the number of hip and other bone fractures increase during the winter months. "Because of thinning bones, falling is one of the biggest health hazards seniors face," Appel said. "Most people know to avoid walking or driving when the weather's bad. But even going out to get the paper, fill the bird feeder or walk the dog can be dangerous if it's slippery."

Kitty litter, sand or salt can provide traction on icy surfaces. Appel recommends keeping bags right by the door so you can scatter before you step out. When you do leave home on foot, use special caution walking on wet and icy pavements. Take plenty of time when crossing roads in bad weather. A cane or walking stick can help maintain balance. If you do drive, watch for slippery pavement when getting in or out of the car. Not all winter falls happen outdoors. Because people spend more time indoors during colder months, Appel says, paying attention to inside accident prevention is equally important.

"Folks will bundle up on the couch and stretch the phone over to where they're sitting or they'll put down small rugs because the floor is cold," Appel said. "Then when they get up, they forget and take a tumble."

To keep your home safe, make sure stairways, hallways and pathways are well-lit and clear of clutter. If you've added small carpets or scatter rugs, be sure they're well-secured to the floor or on non-skid mats. Consider trading in your current phone for a cordless model.

Maintaining a regular program of exercise throughout the winter, says Robin Aborick, director of the Senior Health and Wellness Center at St. Frances Hospital and Medical Center in Connecticut, and choosing the proper footwear, will improve balance and coordination.

"It's really important to keep your joints, tendons and ligaments flexible," Aborick said. "Exercise helps you maintain strength and muscle tone. Something as simple as doing ankle rolls while you're watching TV can really make a difference. If you do start to trip, you'll be better able to catch yourself."

Supportive, well-fitting, low-heeled shoes and boots are also crucial to winter safety. Avoid wearing smooth-soled slippers or socks when walking on stairs and waxed floors inside. Also beware of ill-fitting boots when going out. "Women may be tempted to slip on their husband's boots if they're just going out to get something out of the car or for the mail," Aborick said. "If your foot or shoe isn't securely anchored in your boot, you increase your risk of a fall."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Got bugs? Get milk

By Dennis O'Brien

BELTSVILLE, Maryland—John Hammond's research is aimed at selling milk, just like any milk-mustachioed celebrity.

But not as a drink—as an anti-septic. Hammond, a research plant pathologist at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, is infecting tobacco plants with a common plant virus and a milk-treated virus to find out why milk can kill many of the maladies that damage everything from alfalfa to orchids.

Based on experiments that he began in July, the initial results are promising, he said.

Hammond said tobacco plants that he infected last summer by dabbing pure extract of tobacco mosaic virus on their leaves had about 40 times more lesions, or brown spots, than the plants infected with the milk-treated virus.

The tobacco leaves infected with the pure virus had 226 lesions per leaf. Those infected with the milk-treated virus had five lesions per leaf, he said.

"There's been evidence of this around for a long time, but no one has ever figured out why," he said.

Hammond's work is aimed at finding out why milk combats the spread of mechanically transmitted plant viruses, which cost farmers and greenhouse operators millions of dollars in lost crops each year. Milk's antiseptic effects on plant life have been known in Europe for decades and were documented in the United States in a scientific report published in 1934, according to Hammond and other scientists. For years, Dutch farmers have instructed workers to dip their hands in milk before they harvest tomatoes and peppers, Hammond said.

Mechanically transmitted viruses—such as tobacco mosaic—are passed from plant to plant by hands and pruning shears.

"A gardener can pick up pruning shears to pluck a plant from a vine, and when he

goes to the next plant, if the virus is on the shears, it's spread from one plant to the next," Hammond said.

Hammond said milk's possibilities as a preharvest treatment have never been

ment a few years ago when a colleague suggested using it to clean an infectious virus off the walls of an oven-like growth chamber in his lab.

"That piqued my interest, and I've been



John Hammond, research plant pathologist at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, Md., and Tressa Jones, 18, a senior science and tech student, are studying to see if milk has anti-septic properties to help prevent the spread of diseases in plants.

explored because other preharvest treatments, such as alcohol, bleach and ammonium compounds, are available. But they dull the edge of pruning shears, corrode metal tools and have other drawbacks, Hammond said. "Commercial growers would love to have something easy to use," he said.

Hammond, assigned to the Floral and Nursery Plants Research Unit, said he learned about milk as a preharvest treat-

ment a few years ago when a colleague suggested using it to clean an infectious virus off the walls of an oven-like growth chamber in his lab.

"That piqued my interest, and I've been

damage done by the virus to 15 tobacco plants at the Beltsville greenhouse. "For one thing, I had no idea tobacco leaves grow as fast as they do."

It was the tobacco plant's rapid growth rate—it can sprout three or four leaves in a week—that prompted Hammond to use it in his experiments.

Tobacco has "long been considered the white rat" for plant experiments and is a common test subject, Hammond said.

He chose to infect them with tobacco mosaic virus because its lesions are easy to spot, and the virus is closely related to many of the roughly 1,000 mechanically transmitted viruses that damage commercial crops.

Hammond doesn't believe that the fat in milk plays a part in its power to protect plants, because dry, whole, low-fat and skim milk seem to perform equally, he said. "At this point, we think it's a protein, but we're still trying to figure out which type of protein," he said.

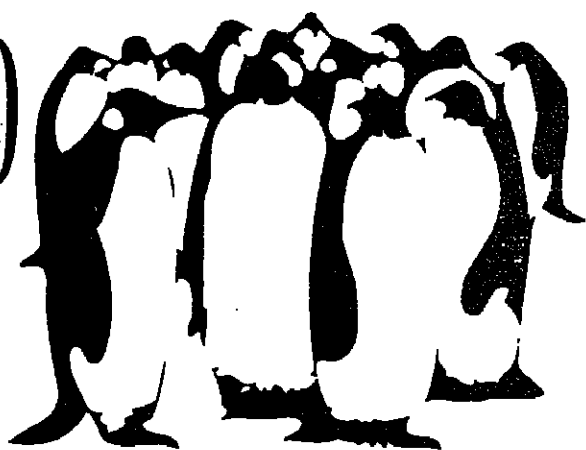
He has a long way to go, said Ian Matha, a chemist and milk expert at the University of Maryland Department of Animal Sciences.

Milk has eight major proteins and dozens of minor proteins, all complicated, Matha said.

"Milk is a very complicated fluid. There's an awful lot of things in it that could give it any given quality," he said. "Hammond has got his work cut out for him. It could take weeks or months to test one protein. Hammond said he is aware of the work ahead. But, he added, research might lead to an extract—a milk concentrate—that could be sprayed on plants and gardening tools to prevent crop losses.

"It could be a lot of work, but I think it's something that is worth looking into," he said.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

AROUND
TOWNInner Wheel Clubs donate
to needy students

THE INNER Wheel Clubs, Amman-Philadelphia presented last Tuesday a donation check to the Fund of the Needy and Talented Students of the National Music Conservatory (NMC). Mr. Kifah Fakhouri, director of the NMC, received the check which was presented in the presence of Mrs. Violette Far and Mrs. Suhair Mikdadi, president of Inner Wheel Clubs Amman and Philadelphia respectively, and members of the administration of both clubs. The donation was made in line with Inner Wheel Clubs slogan for this year geared towards caring for the child and education of the child. The NMC had organized on 29 November 1998 in cooperation with Inner Wheel Clubs- Amman and Philadelphia a concert that featured the youth orchestra of the NMC and number of solo performers.

OFF THE
WALL

By Rana Haddad

Make a wish!

THE YEAR 1998 has just closed its final chapter. For some, it was anything but a good year, but for many others it was an enjoyable 12 months. The year 1998 is history now, and the hands of history will embrace its new infant, 1999.

One can't but wonder about what's hidden behind the last 365 days of the 20th century. I've received many beautiful cards in Christmas, the colors and the echoes of the Christmas carols in church, filled my soul with peace and joy.

However, it occurred to me that the cards have always carried the same message: "wishing you a happy new year." This time, happiness doesn't sound right to me, but the word "wishing" preoccupied my mind.

Have you ever asked yourself: "If I could have one wish, what would it be?"

A 13-year-old girl said that she would like to go swimming with dolphins. A 9-year-old boy said he would wish to have a blue bicycle like the one his friend has.

These were the wishes of children. However, when you ask this question to a 24-year-old man, he might tell you his wish is to get married, buy a car and have children.

An older man said he wouldn't even think about wishing for anything. When asked why, he said that whenever he used to wish, nothing would happen. Like many, this man doesn't know that the fulfillment of a dream needs more than just closing one's eyes and whispering a few words to the fairies.

I hope this man will realize his ambitions after all he has nothing to lose, wishes don't cost anything you know. A wish is like a palace of aspirations where one's flowing imagination dwells.

No matter who we are or where we are, we are always dreaming of something and floating in a world of beauty and elegance.

Nevertheless, there is a price to pay. You may spend days, months or even years fulfilling a wish, and in the end you may also lose a lot along the way. When you turn the lights off, close your eyes and think of the most important things you would like to do in 1999.

Nobody knows it may be your year this time. Don't miss it.

I personally will wish the same thing my grandfather used to wish for every year: good health. She believed that good health is the door for one to fulfill his aspirations, and it is something you barely enjoy these days. I would like to be... I would like to see... are indispensable parts of our daily life.

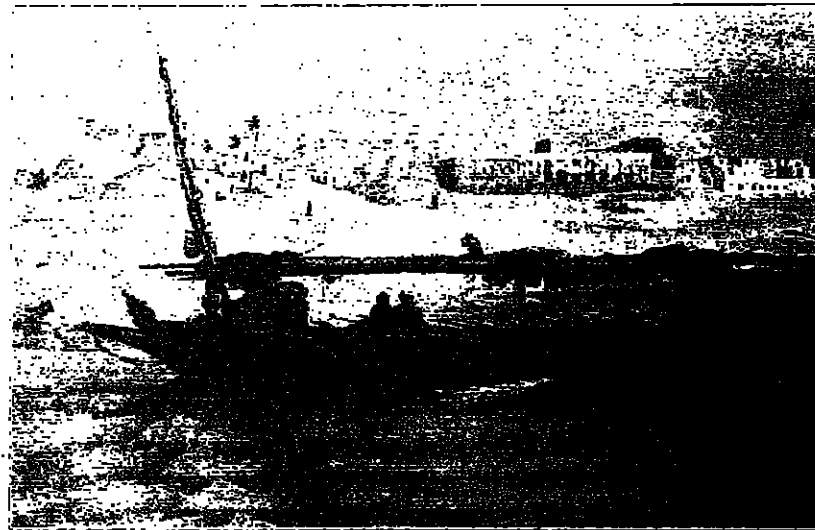
My best wishes for all have a happy and a wonderful new year, and may God bless us all.

The Star
Jordan's political, economic
and cultural weekly
Online

<http://star.arabia.com>

'Egyptian Treasures'

A focus on Pharaonic history

By Ghassan Joha
Star Staff Writer

EGYPT IS believed to be one of the wonders of the world. Its civilization goes back to the early Greeks, and Romans. When one thinks of ancient Egypt and its architecture, the pyramids of Giza and the great Sphinx come to fore at once. The valley of Giza, near Cairo, with its wonderful monuments, is considered a marvel among architectural powers.

Ancient Egypt, the home of an age-old civilization that scattered above the Nile Valley is better symbolized by monuments that were able to stand all the time. The remains, which discovered in the past two centuries of excavations, have handed out an archaeological heritage unrivaled in substance and splendor of complex cultural Pharaonic panorama.

'Mysterious and fascinating' is the impression you get when you first read the 'Egyptian Treasures' volume which reflects the marvelous prospects of ancient Egypt.

The volume, presented in Cairo on 15 December, was especially made and produced by the joint cooperation of the Italian Energy Corporation (ENI) and its Egyptian affiliate IEOC, and published by the Italian publishing house Edizioni White Star.

The catalogue is full of texts and colorful photographs focusing on the rare monuments of the Pharaohs that are currently on display in the Egyptian Antiquities Museum in Cairo. The catalogue, for sure, provides a unique guide to the immense wealth of treasures contained in the museum, that cover the different stages of development in Egyptian culture through the history of Ancient Kingdoms to the Roman times.



The Egyptian Museum, however, houses the world's most celebrated collections of Egyptian antiquities. It is considered as the fifth home

to be build for the Egyptian collections in Cairo.

It's now more than 160 years since ancient Egyptian artifacts were first exhibited in Cairo, and almost 100 years since the opening to the public of the present Egyptian Museum in the heart of

city," said Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, in her introduction to the catalogue. She added that the book is a kind of celebration for the long and distinguished history of the Museum, and of the people who pioneered the science of Egyptology.

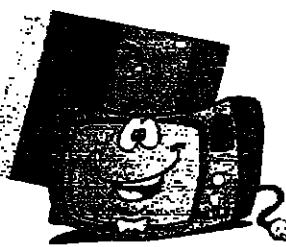
"These people were the first to gave modern humanity the chance to wonder at the art and civilization of the ancient Egyptians."

The volume, which came as a result of several years of work of the world's leading Egyptologists, was carefully edited by Francesco Tiradritti, director of the Archaeological Mission of the Museum of Milan.

Mr Tiradritti said in his definition of the Egyptian history that consuls of the major foreign powers with representatives in Alexandria and Cairo were entranced by the appeal of Egyptian art. He went on to say that the renewed and diffuse interest in Egyptian matters encouraged many members of the European aristocracy. "Thirty years after the Napoleonic expedition, Egypt was thronged with people who, for one reason or another, were interested in the trade and the exportation of relics," pointed out Mr Tiradritti, who continued to say that local Egyptian authorities also nurtured the continuous flow of antiquities out of Egypt.

Prestigious experts also contributed to the book, among them Mohammed Saleh, director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. He gives a preface in the book on the Egyptian Museum since it was first inaugurated on November 1902, under the directorship of Gaston Maspero. He said the book displays the modernization of the collection, the enhancement of lighting and the introduction of automation. "We hope by this book, to extend further highlight to the importance of the artifacts and enhance the visitors' appreciation," said Mr Saleh.

The book presents about 500 exhibits from the legendary collections kept in the Egyptian Museum. Such collections include very old statue of Micerin, the amazing little models of Meketra, and the exquisite jewels of princess Sathor and the valuable treasures of Tutankhamun.

ON
THE
BOX

Wound of Ghazalah!

By Ibtihal Ahmad
Special to The Star

THE RAMADAN television cycle must be the most exciting ever yet. Across the board range, from the religious, social, drama, comedy to kids shows keep the viewers entertained in these cold days of the holy month. And one of the best dramas made by JTV in a long, long time, must be the "Wound of Ghazalah".

The production, currently shown on the main Arabic Channel, is a depiction of a true life story set in the final days of the British mandate on Palestine. The story is located in a Palestinian village, which appears to be somewhere near Jerusalem, judging from the accent of the characters.

Actors from Jordan, Syria and Lebanon participated in the serial, and portrayed the characters up to a T. Viewers can tell that hours and hours of rehearsal must have been spent to perfect the accents. Through their performance and spontaneity, the character actors enthused life on the screen of an era which was at a critical stage of transition.

The periodization of Palestinian civil society was cleverly compartmentalized through the rural-based patriarchal relations, to the external forces represented by the British forces and the back-handed elements of the Zionists who began to buy land for the final grab of Palestine.

One of the best characters in the program is Sa'da who is played by Nadera Imran, a talented actress, and is especially good at different Palestinian dialects. We have seen her in a number of programs as the mother, sister and wife, and in each of these characters she perfected the roles as if they were especially made for her.

It was a pioneering move on the part of JTV to present this program at the time of the stalled peace negotiations because it reminds the viewers of the way the Palestinian land was taken, and tells us there will always be traitors and those willing to sell land as long as there is money involved that is exchanged for loyalty and even for identity.

In a strange twist to the tale, the director and screen writer perhaps eggs our feelings on, mildly suggesting how history repeats itself, this time through, through the occupation itself. Back then the land grab was made surreptitiously through land agents, and interest seekers, today, it is the awesome might of the occupation. For one thing British soldiers have been replaced by Israeli soldiers, and machine guns, and tanks taken the place of truncheons.

The producers of the drama must be congratulated for their artistic creativity. The Wound of Ghazalah portrays the period in question with all its hardships, worries and joys, and it makes us see that little has changed since then. This is made more real through the elaborate costumes of the time. Embroidered dresses were lavishly displayed. In this sense, the program offers an insight between the life of rural folks, and of their superiors, showing a marked contrast between the two. The Baiks, their women and the upper echelons of society represented the modernist elements, their dress being a mixture of the Ottoman influence and the Western style. The program is well-worthwhile watching, in future JTV could well consider introducing more English subtitles, especially for programs like these, for the benefit of foreign audiences.

JOKE STATION

■ An Army driver was chauffeur to a Major who was a notorious womanizer. One day, the major saw a lovely girl. "Turn the car round," he ordered. The driver promptly stalled the car. By the time he had re-started it, the girl had vanished. "Driver," said the major, "you'd be a total loss in an emergency." "I thought I did pretty well," the driver said. "That was my girl."

■ Q: What's black and brown and looks good on a lawyer?
A: A Doberman!

■ P: "Doctor, doctor I think I'm shrinking"
D: "Now, now, you'll just have to be a little patient"

■ Sophie and Shirley, two elderly widows in a Florida adult community, are curious about the latest arrival in their building—a quiet, nice looking gentleman who keeps to himself. Shirley says, "Sophie, you know I'm shy. Why don't you go over to him at the pool and find

out a little about him. He looks so lonely." Sophie agrees, and later that day at the pool, she walks up to him and says, "Excuse me, mister. I hope I'm not prying, but my friend and I were wondering why you looked so lonely."

"Of course I'm lonely," he says. "I've spent the past 20 years in prison."
"You're kidding! What for?"
"For killing my third wife. I strangled her."
"What happened to your second wife?"
"I shot her."

"And, if I may ask, your first wife?"
"We had a fight and she fell off a building."
"Oh my," says Sophie. Then, turning to her friend on the other side of the pool, she yells, "Yoo hoo, Shirley. He's single."

■ Several women appeared in court, each accusing the other of the trouble they were having in the apartment building where they lived. The judge, with Solomon-like wisdom decreed, "I'll hear the oldest first."

The case was closed for lack of evidence!



AGENDA

Exhibition

■ An exhibition of different artists titled "The Warm Winter" continues at the Orfalli Gallery till the end of January 1999.

■ The Jordanian artist Rafiq Al Lahham is currently showing his impressive graphic works at the Fakher Al Nesa Hall in the Ministry of Culture.

■ A photography exhibition by the Jordanian artist Hani Al-Horani is currently on showing in the Baldna

Hall, at the Wasfi Etal Street, and lasts till 1 January 1999.

■ An exhibition of jewelry collection by artist Ghada Fahmi is currently on display at Al Mashreq Gallery until 5 January 1999.

Film

■ The French movie "La Belle Et La Bête" (The Beauty and the Beast) will be shown on 4 January at the French Cultural Center, at 8:30 pm.

The Star's TV GUIDE

Programs on JTV2
from 2 to 7 January 1999

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY

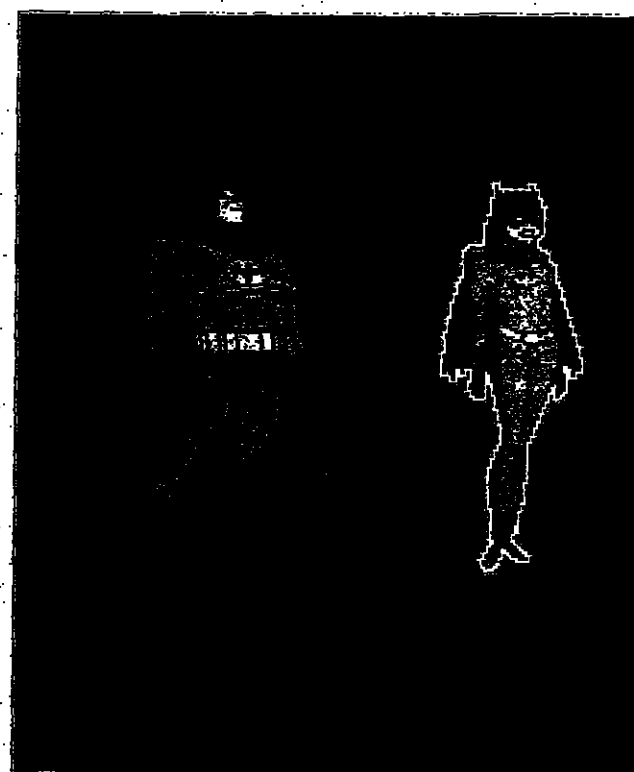
3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari (Religious Program)
3:10—Animaniacs
3:30—The adventure of the Bush Patrol
4:00—Neighbors (Drama)
4:50—Maghreb call to prayer
5:00—French Programs
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz (Arabic series)
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Murphy Brown
8:00—The Changing world of Islam (Religious program)
8:30—The Pretender (Drama)
9:15—ABC of Democracy
10:00—News At Ten
10:30—Film
12:00—New series

SUNDAY

3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari
3:10—Pink Panther (cartoon)
3:30—Life Off
4:00—Documentary
4:50—Maghreb call to prayer
5:05—French Programs
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—The Brittas Empire
8:00—Journey in the Muslim World (Documentary)
8:30—Walker Texas ranger (Police Drama)
9:05—Farming & Ecology
9:30—Behind the Scene
10:00—News in English
10:30—Mini-series
11:50—Doogie Howser

MONDAY

3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari
3:10—Batman



Batman (Cartoon), Monday at 3:10 pm.

3:30—David Cooperfield (Children Drama)
4:00—French Program
4:50—Maghreb call to prayer
5:10—French Program
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Parenthood (Comedy)
8:00—Islamic arts and Antiquities (Documentary)
8:30—Big Sky
9:20—Encounter
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—F.X. The Illusion

TUESDAY
3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari
3:10—La Famille Glad
3:30—Bananas in Pyjamas
4:00—Life Choices (Doc.)
4:55—Maghreb call to prayer
5:10—French Program
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Step by Step
8:00—Journey in the Muslim World
8:30—Our Mutual Friend

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 4634149): The Rock
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 4634149): The River Wild
- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): Sphere
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Wings of The Dove
- Plaza (Tel: 5699238): Saeedi At The American University (Arabic)
- Concord I (Tel: 5677420): Kamannana (Arabic)
- Concord II (Tel: 5677420): Risala Elal Wali (Arabic)

9:15—You and Your Car
9:30—Uncut-with movies
10:00—News At Ten
10:30—Lonesome Dove
11:15—Film:

WEDNESDAY

3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari
3:10—Red Beard
3:30—Hailway Across The Galaxy & Turn Left
4:10—French Program
4:55—Maghreb call to prayer
5:15—French programs
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—(2 Point 4 Children)
8:00—The Changing World of Islam
8:50—N.Y.P.D.
9:30—Great Moments Of Science & Technology
9:40—Faces & Places
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—The Cover Story
11:15—The Album Show

THURSDAY

3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari
3:10—Superman (cartoon)
3:30—Space Precinct (Sci-fi)
4:55—Maghreb call to prayer
5:10—Sparks (Comedy)
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Family Matters (comedy)
8:00—Journey in the Muslim World
8:30—Dr Quinn: The Medicine Woman (Drama)
9:15—Oprah Winfrey Show
10:00—News at Ten

10:30—Film:
12:00—Dudley (Comedy)

FRIDAY

3:00—Holy Koran & Saheeh Bukhari
3:10—Animated Classics
4:00—Treasure Hunt
4:55—Maghreb call to prayer
5:25—The Simpsons
6:15—Omar Bin Abdel Aziz
7:00—News in French
7:15—Words of Wisdom
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Fresh Prince of Bel Air
8:00—Islamic Arts and Antiquities
8:30—Babylon 5
9:15—The BBC documentary
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—The X Files (Drama)
11:15—Feature Film:

PROGRAMMES EN FRAN AIS

SAMEDI
17:00—Faut pas rêver
19:00—Le Journal

DIMANCHE

17:00—Le Grand Secret
19:00—Le Journal

LUNDI

17:00—Thalassé
19:00—Le Journal

MARDI

17:00—Les Yeux D'Helene
19:00—Le Journal

MERCREDI

16:00—Français
17:00—Des trains...
19:00—Le Journal

JEUDI

15:30—H'Juckle Berry Fin
19:00—Le Journal

VENDREDI

19:00—Le Journal

Programs are subject to change by JTV

'Stepmom': Idealizing perfect divorces

By Stephen Hunter

IF THE fawning movies about the problems of the extremely prosperous set your teeth on edge, it's probably best to avoid 'Stepmom.' It's about wealthy people who get all tangled up in their emotions, but for the longest time seems like a tour of two of Martha Stewart's nicer abodes: a beautifully restored turn-of-the-century farmhouse just north of Manhattan and a many-vaulted, ultra-chicly decorated loft in SoHo.

The abodes symbolize the two women in the life of lawyer Luke Harrison (Ed Harris); in his old home, he was married to Jackie (Susan Sarandon) and the father of two adorable kids; now divorced and living in his new home, he is partnered up with much-younger fashion photographer Isabel Kelly (Julia Roberts). For a long time, the film is a vaguely comic riff on the problems of kids-as-ping-pong-balls as the children (adorable Jena Malone and Liam Aiken) get bounced back and forth between domiciles and a mother who loves them and a stepmom who doesn't know what to do with them. Nobody is happy but everybody manages to come up with a quip three times a minute.

Sometimes you wonder: Are Sarandon and Roberts in the same movie? It doesn't feel that way, because Sarandon's performance is brittle,



Julia Roberts

neurotic and cramped by gritty reality. Meanwhile, Roberts is spinning around in a little fantasy world in a thinly imagined version of the fashion business that never for a moment convinces.

The issues turn serious when A) Luke decides to formalize his relationship by marrying Isabel and B) Jackie develops lymphatic cancer that seems clearly terminal. Fortunately the film never turns into a disease-of-the-week thing, as Sarandon, in another of her patented strong woman roles, keeps the boo-hoing to a minimum and sets out to oversee the orderly transfer of mother's duty from herself to her replacement.

The movie seems to illustrate a peculiar fantasy of the late 90s, however: where once movies idealized perfect marriages, now they idealize perfect divorces. That seems to be the direction this one is heading as it chronicles the growth of Sarandon's acceptance until she's finally able to make peace with the situation she's handed.

It's not without moments of wit and powerful emotion, but somehow 'Stepmom' never feels either real enough to move us deeply or bubbly enough to make us forget our woes. Rated PG-13, 124 minutes.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Believing 'Shakespeare in Love'

By Michael O'Sullivan

WHEN WILLIAM Shakespeare experienced writer's block (along with feelings of sexual inadequacy), he would pay a visit to the Elizabethan equivalent of a shrink for a

quick session of psychoanalysis. So John Madden's "Shakespeare in Love" would have you believe—and by the end of this manic and enchanting fantasia, you will believe it.

Set in the bustling London of 1592, the movie could be called "The Making of 'Romeo and Juliet,'" but when the dizzy story begins, the working title of the playwright's rudimentary script is "Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter."

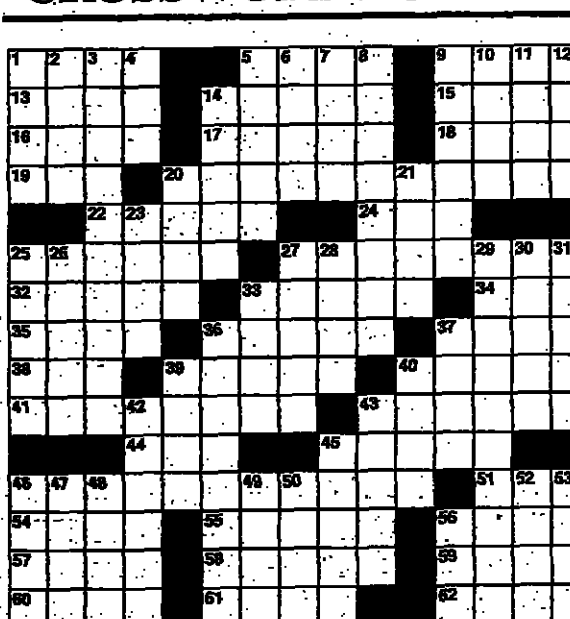
The plot, not to mention the unwieldy title, needs work, as Will (Joseph Fiennes) only too well knows. Furthermore, the play's chief hacker, shady businessman Philip Henslowe (a hysterical Geoffrey Rush), is having his own problems, having been forced to cast his talented dentist in a significant role in order to pay for much-needed work on his rotting choppers.

Enter Viola De Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), a pretty young noblewoman who's been bitten by the theater bug, an unfortunate malady in an age when women were not allowed on stage and female roles were all played by young men.

With a boy's wig and fake mustache, she calls herself Thomas Kent, auditioning for—and getting—the role of

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS
1 Sandwich.
5 Transport.
8 Singer Elliot.
13 Roman poet.
14 "Of Two."
15 Etymological.
16 Soap.
17 Youth.
18 Latin capital.
19 Sign.
20 U.S. orange.
21 U.S. orange.
22 Attorney general, once.
24 Dancer.
25 Operatic.
27 Glass a rub-down.
28 Copier.
29 Essential.
30 Magna.
34 Adjective suffix.
35 Limerick.
36 Pub game.

DOWN
1 Pueblo Indian.
2 Author.
3 Degrading.
4 Lyrical poem.
5 Lyrical poem.
6 Corridor.
7 "No, me down."
8 Perseverance.
9 Eye part.
10 Eager.
11 Isosceles triangle.
12 Gun down.
14 Out of order.
20 Planes for one.
21 Minor or major.
23 cut (manages).
25 Degrees.
26 Painter.
27 Tracking.

place:
28 Chi-chi.
29 Office furniture.
30 Gladstone.
31 Feel.
32 Bitter.
33 Drum's partner.
34 Money supply.
35 Cargo space.
36 East Indian sailor.
37 Flooding.
38 Untidy.
39 Duck.
40 Ceiling.
41 Island.
42 Long ago.
43 Lamb's coat.
44 Dawn.
45 Erosion.
46 Big Blue lake.

OFF THE WALL



THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: On Monday, the day and night are of equal length. This is called the winter solstice, and it also marks the point when the sun officially goes into Capricorn, the sign of the entrepreneur.

Aries (March 21-April 19). The sun's transit through Capricorn usually brings career opportunities you'll start to see soon.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You are very strong right now and getting stronger. You'll be learning and growing and becoming even more marvelous.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You're more interested in financial matters. Following a strong leader could get you way outside your safety zone. Don't be scared. Looks like you'll be good at it.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You may feel a little pinched for funds, but you're not in this game all by yourself. You've got others who'd be willing to play with you.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Your workload is going to increase. A partner's help is also crucial. Don't even try to do everything by yourself.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Problems will come up that demand your attention. You'll have to fill out paperwork and meet demanding people's expectations.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). As the sun goes into Capricorn, you'll start focusing more on home and family. That's always important for you this time of year, but now more than ever.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It will look like you're getting smarter. Actually, you're just able to learn more quickly. These are good days for making decisions about home and family.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're interested in everything and that's very important. There's a problem you're facing, and it looks like you've given up on it. Don't.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The sun's going into your sign, which should be invigorating. Use newfound powers to increase your income.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're very strong and that's good, because you're about to face a few more difficulties.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). The sun going into Capricorn brings the team into your picture. The project may be too difficult to do by yourself, so go ahead and let other people help.

Week: You're absolutely brilliant this year where financial matters are concerned. You can make a lot more money by following the rules.

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Bridge

Don't Trust Your Eyes
By Omar Sharif and Tannah Hirsch

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ A 7 6
♥ Q 5 3
♦ A 9 3 2
♣ Q 9 4

EAST
♠ 5 4
♥ 10 8
♦ 10 8 4
♣ J 6 5

SOUTH
♠ Q 10 9 8 3
♥ A K 4
♦ K Q 7
♣ 7 6

The bidding:
South West North East
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
2♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
4♥ Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: Ace of ♠

Why does falsecarding reap such rewards, even at the highest levels? Although the expert is aware of the situations where a falsecard is mandatory, the mathematics favor that it is an honest card, so the expert tends to go with the odds.

Both sides reached a contract of four spades on similar auctions on this deal from a team match. At both tables the opening lead was the ace of clubs, and both Wests continued with the deuce in response to partner's encouraging signal. Both Easts won with the 10 and persisted with the king. Both Souths ruffed with the ten of spades.

Here the defense parted ways. At one table West overruffed with the jack and shifted to a heart. Declarer won in hand and ran the queen of spades, which held. A spade continuation picked up the king and declarer had the rest of the tricks. Game bid and made.

At the other table West chose to overruff with the king of spades! The defender also shifted to a heart. After much thought declarer decided to accept West's play at face value, and so placed the jack of spades with East. A spade was led to the ace and a spade was returned. When East followed low, declarer took the finesse for the "marked" jack of spades. West was happy to produce this card for a one-trick set.

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Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NELOB
YAIRF
UNPOOC
BIRDHY



Answer: THE () OF ()
Jumbles: NOBLE FAIRY COUPON HYBRID

Answer: What a lawyer with a hangover ends up with —

Words of Wisdom

Your word is your most valuable possession; it can be given and kept at the same time.

Too much knowledge can cripple as surely as too little.

Imitation is flattering, but everyone frowns on counterfeit copies.

If you want to get ahead in business, try to get your boss promoted.

Resourcefulness is one of those incredibly useful talents that simply can't be taught.

You prize most what you work for the hardest.

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Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Un soldat israélien tué par erreur par une unité de Tsahal

Un soldat israélien a été tué et deux autres ont été blessés tôt mercredi dans le sud du Liban lorsqu'une unité de Tsahal patrouillant dans la "zone de sécurité" a ouvert le feu par erreur sur une autre. Les deux groupes avaient entamé leur patrouille ensemble, mais l'un d'eux avait ensuite perdu son chemin dans l'obscurité. "L'unité arrière s'est séparée de l'avant-garde et a tiré sur elle en croyant qu'il s'agissait de terroristes", a expliqué à Radio Israël le général Etti Eitan, commandant des forces israéliennes dans le secteur. Selon le général Eitan, l'unité arrière avait auparavant demandé et obtenu la permission d'ouvrir le feu sur le groupe non identifié. Le soldat tué est le sergent Ohad Zach, âgé de 19 ans et originaire du village de Nofit, dans le nord d'Israël. C'est le 24e militaire israélien tué au Liban-Sud depuis le début de l'année. Regrettant la "négligence" à l'origine selon lui de cette méprise, David Bar-Ilan, proche conseiller de Benjamin Nétanyahou, a assuré que l'incident ne changeait rien à la ligne adoptée par le gouvernement à l'égard de l'occupation israélienne du Liban-Sud. "Le besoin de sécurité des habitants de Galilée reste le même", a-t-il déclaré.



Editorial

Changer d'heure

C'est à la fois minuscule et énorme. C'est un détail mais c'est toute la vie qui s'en trouve changée. Au cas où cela aurait échappé à l'attention de nos lecteurs, le soleil se couche tôt. Très tôt. Trop tôt. Dès trois heures de l'après-midi, on le voit décliner gentiment, dire au revoir.

En revanche, si l'on ne sait que trop à quelle heure le soleil se couche, personne ne sait à quelle heure il se lève. Quatre heures du matin ? Trois heures ? Mystère. Chaque tentative de voir le soleil se lever échoue de façon certaine, tant l'astre de jour est, dans notre région, minimal voir noctambule, plutôt paradoxal pour un astre de jour. Ainsi, lorsque, harassés, nos concitoyens font violence à leur envie de grasse matinée et se lèvent aux aurores, d'aurore pas la moindre trace. Pas la plus petite satisfaction de voir un beau lever de soleil : rien.

Mais outre nos petites déceptions matinales, le fait que nos journées se trouvent ainsi amputées nous vole quelque chose de plus précieux que tout l'or du monde. Celui nous vole du temps. Le temps de la vie toute simple, celui passé à déambuler dans les jolies, à respirer, à vivre enfin.

Et le tourisme, dont on nous rebat les oreilles. Pour lequel on construit des routes, des hôtels, des restaurants... Que va venir faire le touriste dans un pays où une minuscule grasse matinée réduit la durée d'ensoleillement d'une journée à trois heures ? Soyons réaliste, le touriste n'a pas pour son argent, il est malheureux.

Pourtant, quel serait le coût d'un changement d'heure ? Pas grand chose sans doute. Cela permettrait de façon certaine de substantielles économies d'énergie puisque chacun sait que la nuit, pour y voir clair, l'être urbain utilise de l'électricité. Et que pour se chauffer, cet irresponsable utilise du gaz, du gaz ou que sais-je encore. Et chacun sait que lorsque le soleil est couché, il fait plus froid. Mais ces considérations, pour simples qu'elles soient, doivent échapper à quelques hauts responsables qui n'estiment pas nécessaire un passage à "l'heure d'hiver". Car chacun sait que la Jordanie est un pays dont les ressources naturelles sont telles, qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de se préoccuper d'économie d'énergie...

Pire : peut-être ne s'agit-il que d'un oubli, et que personne n'a pensé à cette décision salutaire. Ou peut-être que personne, dans le dédale administratif, n'est en charge d'une telle décision et que fatalement, personne ne puisse la prendre.

Comme ne le disait l'un de nos joyeux concitoyens : « en fait, les nuits amputées sont aussi agitées que les nuits madrilènes ». Mais c'est normal, poursuivait-il, puisque les nuits amputées commencent à quatre heures et demi... Bien sûr il y a Ramadan et nous voulons tous célébrer iftar le plus tôt possible... Mais deux heures de soleil ne valent-elles pas deux heures de jeûne ?

G. W.

Vous voulez écrire en français ?

Stéphane Foucart
5664153

Politique

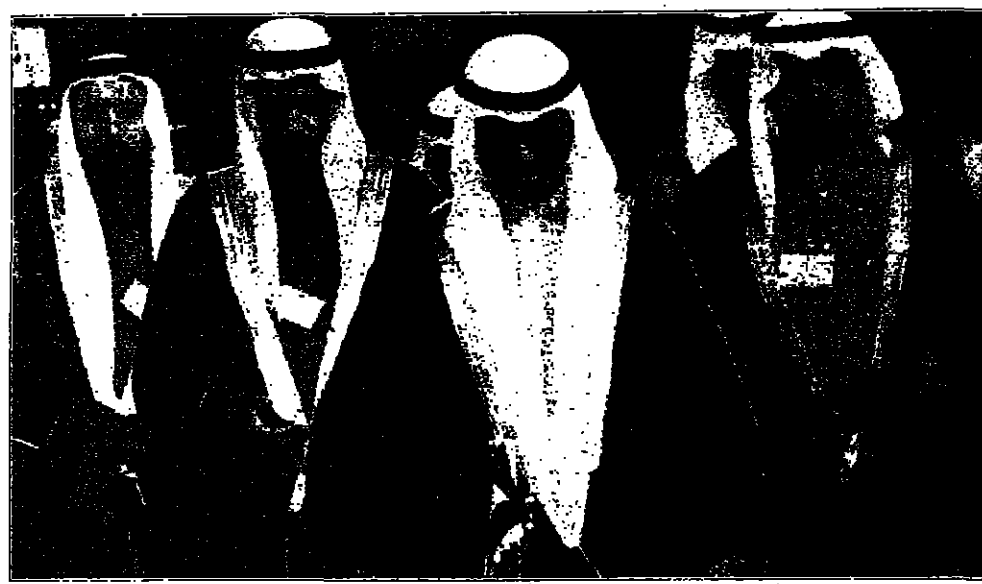
Les parlementaires attaquent, les gouvernements s'inclinent

Après la réunion d'urgence des parlementaires arabes à Amman, les espoirs d'une levée unilatérale de l'embargo contre l'Irak s'amenuisent dans la population arabe. Récit des quatre derniers jours

L'Union des parlementaires arabes (UPA) aura essayé, elle a, de toute évidence, échoué. La réunion d'urgence de l'UPA, convoquée par le Parlement jordanien dimanche à Amman a soulevé dans les rues de tous les pays arabes - à l'exception du Koweït - un immense espoir de voir enfin les politiques rejoindre le sentiment général des populations. En vain. Les résolutions prises par l'UPA à la fin de la semaine dernière ne faisaient pas dans les demi-mesures. « Ferme condamnation » des frappes américano-britanniques contre l'Irak, rejet de toute forme d'intervention extérieure dans les affaires régionales, reconnaissance de l'intégrité et de la souveraineté du territoire irakien, rejet du concept de "no-fly zone" dans le nord et le sud de l'Irak (ces dernières ne relevant pas de résolutions du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU)... Et surtout, l'UPA enjoignait les gouvernements des pays arabes à lever sans autre forme de

procès l'embargo sur l'Irak, et appelait à la tenue d'un sommet des pays arabes. Fassi Sourour, président de l'UPA et rapporteur du Parlement égyptien, n'avait pas mâché ses mots. Il avait dénoncé « une politique dangereuse » menaçant « la sécurité régionale et internationale » et évoqué la « fureur du monde arabe » quant à « l'application sélective des résolutions de l'ONU » en fonction « de l'intérêt de Washington et des grandes puissances ».

Mais déjà, au cours de la réunion de l'UPA, l'ébauche du bel édifice de l'unité arabe se craquelait. Alors que le Prince Hassan affirmait au cours de son discours que le peuple irakien a droit à « la liberté et la démocratie », Saadoun Hammadi, chef de la délégation irakienne, s'est indigné de cet appel aux droits de l'homme. « Nous n'avons pas besoin de droits de l'homme en Irak », a-t-il lancé lors de la séance d'ouverture. Nous vou-



Les délégués des pays du Golfe, le 27 décembre, à Amman, lors de la réunion de l'UPA

lons des voix qui s'en prennent aux Etats-Unis ! C'était le début de la discorde, et cette dernière n'allait pas s'arrêter.

Dès le lendemain, le lundi 28 décembre, l'Arabie Saoudite, chef de file des pays du Golfe, fait savoir par le biais du chef

de sa diplomatie, le Prince Saoud al Fayçal, qu'elle s'oppose à la tenue d'un sommet arabe autour de la question

irakienne. Le même jour, confortés par la position saoudienne, le Bahreïn, Oman et les Comores répondent par la négative à l'invitation de la Ligue arabe à participer à une réunion des Ministres des affaires étrangères.

Cette réunion ministérielle, qui devait se tenir mercredi 30, a été reportée au 24 janvier prochain. Alors même que les gouvernements étaient incapables d'arrêter une date pour une simple réunion ministérielle, on pouvait craindre la mort prématurée du fameux sommet.

Mais à l'initiative de qui a pu être prononcé un report d'un mois de la réunion ? Même cela reste quelque peu mystérieux tant l'entente arabe reste chaotique et précaire. Mardi 29 décembre, les Emirats arabes unis nient farouchement avoir été à l'origine du report. Bagdad accuse le Koweït et l'Arabie Saoudite d'être des suppôts de Washington et d'être à l'origine du report, et Amr Moussa, Ministre égyptien des affaires étrangères, affirme quant à lui que le report ne fait que donner « davantage de temps aux consultations ». Dans le même temps, Oussama al Baz, conseiller du Président

égyptien, excluait un sommet arabe auquel participerait Bagdad. « Il n'est pas réaliste, a-t-il déclaré, de penser que certains pays arabes vont accepter de participer à un sommet prenant part à la direction irakienne, au plus haut niveau ».

En fin de soirée, Esmet Abdel Meguid, secrétaire général de la Ligue, avoue de façon un peu vague que le report a été demandé par « des Etats arabes du Golfe ». Mais à Bagdad les spéculations vont bon train. Le quotidien Al Kadissiya, organe du pouvoir baassiste, affirme en effet que la réunion du Caire a été torpillée à la suite d'une « visite secrète de Saoud al Fayçal au Caire ». Les esprits étant monopolisés par le report de la fameuse réunion, on oublie le sommet. Et Hamad bin Djassim bin Djibr al Sani, ministre qatari des affaires étrangères, de souligner, dans un éclair de lucidité, que de toute façon « la plupart des sommets arabes se concluent sur une note insipide » et « qu'il ne faut pas que le peuple irakien espère trop de ce sommet ». Sommet qui par ailleurs reste à l'état de vague projet.

Hamad bin Djassim, Ministre des affaires étrangères du Qatar

Le Jourdain

Verbatim

Morceaux choisis du discours du Prince Hassan lors de la séance d'ouverture de la réunion de l'UPA

« Nous connaissons, en Jordanie, l'Irak et son peuple, nous connaissons son histoire glorieuse et sa grande civilisation... Le peuple irakien a subi de violents bombardements qui ont provoqué la mort d'hommes, de femmes, et la destruction de l'infrastructure du pays. Notre position sur l'Irak, en Jordanie, repose sur les principes suivants : 1. Préserver la dignité du peuple irakien et son droit à mener une vie libre. 2. Maintenir la continuité entre le passé glorieux de l'Irak, le présent, et le futur. 3. Préserver l'unité du territoire irakien. 4. Garantir à son peuple les mêmes droits et la même justice sans discrimination de religion, d'origine ethnique... Nous n'approuvons pas la balkanisation de la région... Nous aimerions voir tous les prisonniers de guerre arabes rentrer chez eux... Le peuple irakien, qui a énormément souffert ne doit pas être laissé sans programme humanitaire qui pourrait lui assurer ses besoins élémentaires et le soulager de ses souffrances... de nombreux pays islamiques, européens ou asiatiques ont clairement montré leur solidarité avec le peuple irakien d'un simple point de vue humanitaire. Dans ce contexte, nous pouvons avoir à l'esprit que la reconstruction de ce qui a été détruit pourra se faire grâce à un remarquable effort de la communauté internationale... Les sanctions (contre l'Irak) sont humainement inacceptables et politiquement inutiles. »

Sondage Les Français massivement opposés aux frappes

Dans un sondage BVA-Paris Match, les Français se disent opposés à 66% aux frappes américano-britanniques contre l'Irak

Environ 66% des sondés ont répondu « non » à la question « Approuvez-vous la décision américaine d'ouvrir le bombardement de l'Irak », alors que seuls 25% d'entre eux ont répondu « oui » et que 9% se sont déclarés sans opinion. C'est en tout cas la conclusion principale d'un sondage BVA-Paris Match réalisé les 18 et 19 décembre dernier, en pleine offensive américano-britannique. Par ailleurs le sentiment des Français face à la nouvelle crise irakienne semble quelque peu relever d'un clivage droite/gauche puisque les résultats varient sensiblement en fonction des affinités politiques des sondés. Ainsi, les sympathisants de gauche ne sont que 18% à approuver la décision américaine,

alors que les sympathisants de droite sont près de 36% à soutenir les frappes contre l'Irak. De même, ils sont 76% à les désapprouver à gauche, contre 58% à droite.

Par rapport à l'attitude de la France dans cette crise, 76% des sondés - toutes catégories confondues - ont répondu « oui » à la question « La France a-t-elle eu raison de rester cette fois en dehors du conflit entre l'Irak et les Etats Unis ? ». Seuls 17% d'entre eux estiment que la France aurait dû prendre part aux frappes. Ici, le fossé entre les diverses tendances politiques des sondés s'amenuise puisque puisque 82% des sympathisants de gauche ont répondu

« oui », et 75% des sympathisants de droite également. Soit un écart largement moindre qu'à la question précédente. Seuls 17% des sympathisants de gauche ont répondu par la négative à cette seconde question, contre 19% des amis de la droite. C'est à dire un écart encore plus faible. Il semble donc que l'opinion française soit plus en phase avec les positions tranchées de sa presse - qui a unanimement condamné, en terme parfois durs, les frappes contre l'Irak - à celle de son gouvernement qui n'a pas, comme la Chine ou la Russie, clairement condamné l'usage de la force contre l'Irak.

Le Jourdain

Le Proche Orient dans la presse française Satan versus Satan

Les frappes aériennes sur Bagdad, la veille du 17 décembre, suite à une nouvelle crise intervenue Avec l'Uncom, ont été prioritaires pour la presse française. Quels sont les vrais buts de ces bombardements ? Quelles impressions et quels effets ont-ils produits ?

Jean-Pierre Perrin, dans son article « Renard du désert affaibli l'opposition irakienne », publié par Libération le 24 décembre, n'hésite pas à évoquer les « paradoxes » de cette opération, en expliquant qu'« elle a renforcé un régime qu'elle voulait déstabiliser, plaçant une nouvelle fois en porte-à-faux une opposition déjà largement délégitimée. En prenant comme cible la Garde républicaine, garde prétorienne de Saddam Hussein, Washington a clairement montré que le but des frappes n'était pas seulement les programmes d'armements de destruction massive ». L'auteur précise : « Même s'il y a eu des dégâts, les bombardements sont loin d'avoir mis les rails à genoux » et souligne que « pour l'opposition, le rapport de forces demeure inchangé. Pire, le régime a profité des frappes pour la faire apparaître comme le parti de l'étranger : elle peut donc craindre les effets de la propagande sur une population aux sentiments souvent nationalistes ».

« La France est-elle favorable à un abandon du contrôle des capacités de production par l'Irak d'armes chimiques et bactériologiques, puisque ses représentants ont affirmé à maintes reprises qu'un tel contrôle est impossible ? » s'interroge Jacques Amalric, dans l'édition de Libération, le 2 décembre.



Le mal absolu selon Washington

Pour lui d'ailleurs, la question que se pose la France est « quelle est la meilleure façon d'atteindre notre objectif ? Comment faire pour que dans un Moyen-Orient pacifié, l'Irak puisse cohabiter avec ses voisins en ne redonnant pas un danger... Nous disons aujourd'hui qu'après sept années de contrôle par l'Uncom, en dépit des entraves posées par les Irakiens, et après les bombardements anglo-américains, il est raisonnable

de penser que l'Irak n'a plus le même potentiel qu'en 1990, ou qu'il y a quinze jours. Il serait surprenant qu'on puisse considérer l'Irak comme plus ou aussi dangereux après les frappes qu'avant ». Quant aux Etats-Unis, l'éditorialiste se demande s'ils sont « prêts à revenir sur leurs positions au conseil de sécurité ? », et rappelle que « depuis des mois nous leur disions qu'une frappe ne réglerait pas le problème tel qu'ils nous semblaient posé, leurs objectifs ont varié. On ne contrôle pas mieux des stocks chimiques cachés en les bombardant et en disant en même temps qu'on ne les bombarde pas car ce serait trop dangereux. Cherchons-ils la chute de Saddam Hussein ? Mais alors, les frappes ne constituent pas non plus, on le constate, un moyen adéquat ».

« Les risques de l'après-Saddam », tel est le titre de la chronique de Pierre Belau, dans Le Point du 19 décembre. Le problème pour le rédacteur de la rubrique ne réside pas dans le débat sur le désarmement, mais ailleurs : « Les Etats Unis ne lèveront pas l'embargo tant que Saddam sera au pouvoir. Pour Washington, le dictateur est le mal absolu. On ne transige pas avec les forces démonsiaques ». Pierre Belau assure que ce que les Etats Unis veulent n'est pas facile à atteindre : « Les opposants, auxquels le Congrès a octroyé une copieuse manne financière, ont jusqu'à présent, surtout démontré soit leur incapacité totale, soit, comme les chefs

kurdes, leur irrépressible propension à se battre entre eux ». Mais ce n'est pas tout pour Pierre Belau qui va plus loin dans son analyse, rappelant qu'il y a plus grave : « déstabiliser Saddam n'est pas une finalité. Que faire « the day after » (le jour d'après) ? L'Irak est situé au confluent de plusieurs lignes de fracture : celle entre le monde arabe et le monde pers, entre l'Islam chiite et l'Islam sunnite, entre le monde turc et les déserts d'Arabie... le régime est basiste et se réclame d'une idéologie laïque... comment se débarrasser de Saddam Hussein tout en préservant l'unité du pays ? Telle est la question que se posent les américains ».

Les élections anticipées d'un an et demi sur le calendrier prévu, et le coup de grâce que ce délai peut porter à la paix, déjà en attente de l'application totale des accords de Wye Plantation, est traité par Libération le 24 décembre : « paix : otage des urnes irakiennes ». Christophe Boltanski constate que « le texte signé en grande pompe à Washington il y a deux mois risque d'être gelé pendant toute la durée de la campagne électorale... » de fait, le processus de paix est stoppé depuis une dizaine de jours, l'Etat hébreu fait dépendre sa poursuite du respect par les Palestiniens de nouvelles conditions (aux dires même des américains).

La, Boltanski pose la question : « surenchère électorale ou politique déléguée ? on peut, depuis le début, s'interroger sur la volonté du premier ministre d'appliquer ce qu'il a signé, le mémorandum de Wye River lui avait per-

mis de répondre aux pressions internationales et de satisfaire, dans la perspective d'une avancée du scrutin, la France modérée de son électoral, qui réclamait une reprise, même modeste, du processus de paix. Espérons-Il, en vidant l'accord de son contenu, retrouver l'appui des ultranationalistes tout en conservant ses gains initiaux ? D'ores et déjà, Wye River, même gelé, est l'un de ses principaux arguments de campagne pour la fois stigmatiser l'attitude des palestiniens et prouver ses intentions pacifistes ».

« Les Etats-Unis ne lèveront pas l'embargo tant que Saddam sera au pouvoir. Pour Washington, le dictateur est le mal absolu. On ne transige pas avec les forces démonsiaques. »

Le Point

« Les escadrons de la mort » est le sujet dont traite Le Point du 19 décembre, sur l'Iran, évoquant ainsi l'assassinat de cinq intellectuels en moins d'un mois : « Comme aux pires heures de la révolution iranienne, la peur règne dans les milieux intellectuels de Téhéran... Tous (parlant des cinq intellectuels qui ont trouvé la mort) ont un point commun : leur opposition à l'aile ultraconservatrice du régime. Quatre d'entre eux appartenaient au courant laïque ». « Derrière cette chasse meurtrière aux intellectuels libéraux, poursuit Le Point, c'est le président Mohammad Khatami, religieux modéré, qui cherche à affaiblir l'aile conservatrice du régime. Il a été élu Avec le soutien de nombreux laïques, mais il n'a pas en main les instruments du pouvoir. Ni le Parlement à majorité conservatrice ni même les forces de l'ordre, dont les responsables sont nommés par Khatami, le guide suprême de la révolution, lui aussi conservateur ».

Nahed Al Khloof

Vous pouvez désormais communiquer avec la rédaction du Jourdain :

le-jourdain@eudoramail.com

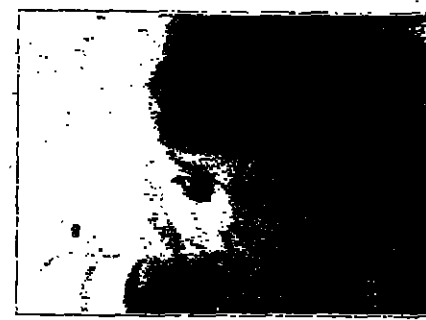
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Le mot de la semaine «Embargo»

L'embargo est un terme de marine. Il n'est pas surprenant que l'Espagne, qui l'a vu naître, ait été la première à l'utiliser dans le vocabulaire de ses navigateurs. Le français l'a emprunté à l'espagnol et il se trouve aujourd'hui dans le vocabulaire de tous les pays. L'embargo est formé à partir du verbe espagnol *embargar*, dont l'origine remonte au latin *barra*, la barre. L'embargo est à l'origine l'interdiction de laisser partir les vaisseaux. Cette interdiction se trouve également dans le dictionnaire de l'Académie française, littéralement la fermeture du port. L'embargo a fini par désigner l'interdiction de

circulation de n'importe quel objet. Le sens d'embargo n'a toutefois pas achevé son évolution. L'histoire de cette dernière décennie lui a donné une nouvelle orientation. Décréter un embargo contre un pays est en quelque sorte l'étranger. Le principe de cette stratégie est quasiment identique à celui des armées antiques qui investissaient une ville : empêcher toute entrée et toute sortie de ses murs pour l'amener à capituler. C'est finalement dans le vocabulaire arabe que l'on rejoint la réalité politique : embargo se dit *hissar*, du verbe *ahssar*, assiéger.

Véronique Abu-Nijmeh



Irak : une gaminette sous embargo

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman
Cinéma

Cycle «Jean Marais, l'âme d'un poète»

La Belle et la Bête, de Jean Cocteau (1946). vidéo, 100', avec J. Day, M. André.
Pour sauver son père, la Belle doit séjourner avec la Bête qui vit seule dans son château.
Séance le lundi 4 janvier 1999 au Centre de coopération culturelle et linguistique, à 20h30.

La rédaction du Jourdain adresse à ses lecteurs ses meilleurs vœux pour l'année 1999

Société

Y a-t-il une pilote dans l'avion ?

L'École de l'air jordanienne accueille cette année trois étudiantes. Deux d'entre elles se vouent à la carrière de pilote : une première dans le monde arabe qui place le pays aux avant-postes de la lutte pour l'égalité des sexes.

L'amélioration de la condition féminine, en Jordanie, va bon train. Dans le cas présent, on pourrait même s'aventurer à dire qu'il y a eu un pas de plus. «Il n'est pas rare, désormais, de trouver des femmes très bien formées à toutes sortes de professions», affirme Mohammad Khawalde, directeur général de l'École de l'air jordanienne. Dans les rangs de ses ouailles, ce dernier peut en effet se féliciter de la présence de trois étudiantes, dont deux se vouent à la profession de pilote dans l'aviation civile, et une à celle de mécanicienne spécialisée.

Les seules du monde arabe

Pantalon et chemise bien marine, coupés à la garçonne, ces trois filles sont les seules dans le monde arabe à faire ce qu'elles font. «Voler était mon rêve», confie Lena Rabadi. Je pensais que cet idéal était impossible à atteindre mais tout cela est finalement devenu réalité. Et, ne cachant son plaisir, «je suis très heureuse qu'une académie, en Jordanie, nous donne la possibilité d'apprendre le métier de pilotes». Cela montre, poursuit-elle, que nous sommes dans un



Les deux apprenties pilotes posent devant leur appareil d'école

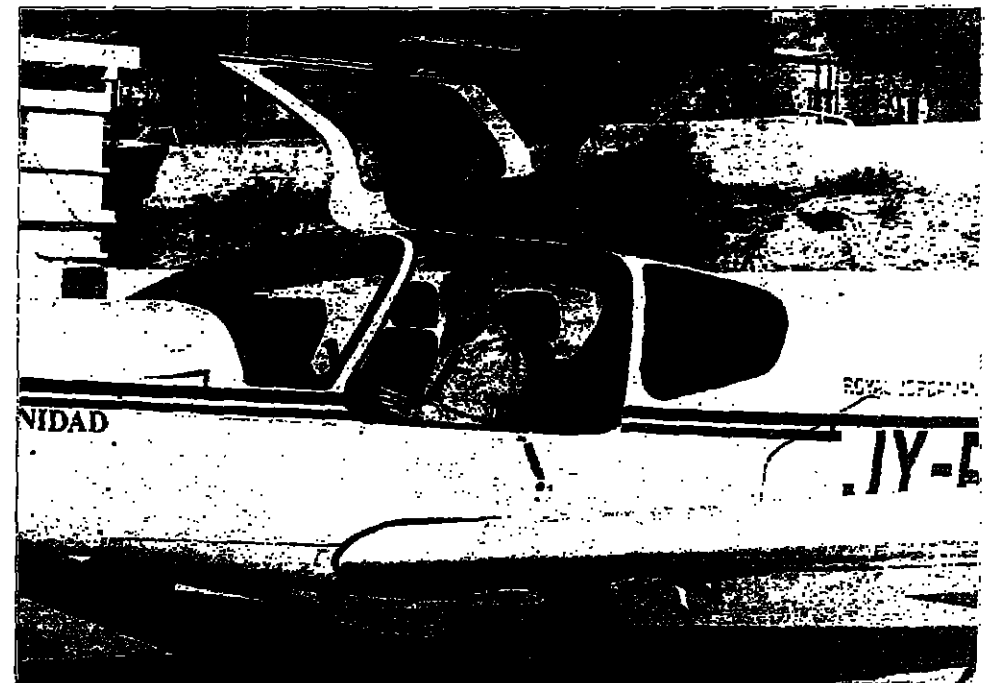
pays où l'égalité entre les sexes est une idée qui fait son chemin, et que les choses ont réellement changé, depuis quelques années. Mais pour la jeune femme, réaliser ce rêve est

également un défi personnel, une façon individuelle de montrer à une société qui reste, malgré tout, largement sujette aux préjugés sexistes, qu'une femme peut également remplir

des fonctions qui jusque là étaient strictement réservées aux hommes. Orouba Obeadat, quant à elle, étudie la mécanique dans la même académie. Elle aussi

est confiante dans l'avenir de la femme dans le Royaume hachémite et prédit la fin des préjugés interdisant aux femmes certains emplois à haut niveau de responsabilités. «La nouvelle génération a évolué dans sa façon de penser, explique-t-elle, et les femmes ont maintenant accès à des carrières de plus en plus diverses. Au début, confie-t-elle cependant, c'était difficile car tous les autres étudiants de ma spécialité sont des garçons. Je ne me sentais pas à ma place, pour- suite-elle, mais avec les jours, j'ai réalisé que la communication entre eux et moi pouvait passer, et que peu à peu s'installait un respect mutuel. Et, preuve d'un réel glissement des conceptions, elle ajoute n'avoir jamais été soumise à des pressions familiales pour renoncer. Au contraire, le soutien familial a été essentiel. C'est ma famille, explique Joline Makhlouf, l'autre apprentie pilote, qui me donne la force de continuer. »

Mais il reste que tout n'est pas toujours facile pour ces trois exceptions à une règle qui vacille. Elles doivent toujours encore endurer, par moments, les sarcasmes de personnes «très conservatrices», dont parfois certains étudiants



Ci-dessus, l'une des deux apprenties pilotes dans son appareil. Ci-dessous, Mohammad Khawalde, directeur général de l'École de l'air jordanienne

qui restent persuadés qu'une femme ne peut devenir pilote au même titre qu'un homme. Mais c'est plutôt l'optimisme qui préside à leur propos : «l'attitude des gens trop conservateurs changera avec le temps, espère Orouba. Il nous faudra de la patience et de la persévérance dans ce que nous entreprenons. Je pense que nous sommes capables de tout faire, comme les hommes». Y compris piloter un avion et mener à bon port ses passagers. Mais les trois jeunes filles

n'en gardent pas moins conscience que trouver un emploi à la sortie de l'académie ne sera pas chose facile. Pas facile, mais pas impossible disent-elles en souriant. La société jordanienne ne peut qu'évoluer, pensent-elles, et accepter à terme le fait que des femmes puissent se trouver à des postes importants. Joline, Orouba et Lena, qui ont aujourd'hui 18 ans, seront parmi les premières. Gageons qu'elles feront des émules !

Amineh Ishtay



Espionite

Le directeur de nuit, un roman anglais de John Le Carré, 1993. En prêt au Centre culturel français.

John Le Carré ne marquera pas l'histoire de la littérature. C'est certain. Sa prose, sans être lourde, n'a ni l'irrésistible ni l'originalité des grands noms de la littérature anglophone auxquels il est parfois comparé : Stevenson, Conrad, etc. Il n'en reste pas moins que John Le Carré a un talent immense puisqu'en réécrivant toujours la même histoire, qui est, grosso modo, toujours celle d'une «infiltration» ou d'une «exfiltration» dans les milieux de l'espionnage, il parvient à chaque fois à captiver son lecteur. Dans *Le directeur de nuit*, Jonathan Pyne, ancien soldat britannique et patriote est un homme finissant, déçu, amer, qui s'échappe de la carrière militaire pour être directeur de nuit dans divers hôtels de luxe. Une nuit, il voit arriver un client - Dicky Roper, trafiquant d'armes internationales - qu'il connaît bien et pour cause, puisque ce dernier a fait assassiner, quelque années auparavant, la femme dont Pyne était épris. Cette réminiscence correspond avec la volonté d'une «agence» britannique de faire enfin tomber l'abominable Roper. Pyne remplit donc et, à la suite d'une mise en scène au cours de laquelle on lui fabrique un «nouveau passé», est infiltré dans l'organisation mafieuse de son pire ennemi. Il devient, tout au long de la trame, «l'observateur rapproché».

Cette fois, avec *Le directeur de nuit*, Le Carré s'échappe du cadre habituel de ses romans de plume. A une narration presque administrative des faits, il substitue des mélanges de styles narratifs, comme si le roman constituait une sorte d'oeuvre collective à laquelle tous les personnages auraient un tant soit peu participé. Malgré tout, si elle est moins sèche que dans la plupart de ses autres romans (*La taupe*, *La petite fille au tambour*, *L'espion qui venait du froid*...), sa prose ne parvient pas à se départir de son côté froid, mélancolique, impersonnel.

Mais c'est justement ce côté formel qui fait l'intérêt de la plupart des oeuvres de Le Carré. Car au delà de



John Le Carré, écrivain et correspondant distingué du MI-6

l'intrigue elle-même qui peut à chaque fois se résumer à quelques phrases, le lecteur perçoit dans la profusion de détails qui fait un livre de Le Carré, une sorte d'authenticité. Non qu'il s'agisse de l'authenticité des faits bruts, mais tout ce autour de quoi se construit la trame de l'histoire doit être juste. Et pour cause, John Le Carré, alias David Cornwell, a longtemps été l'un des distingués «correspondants» du MI-6, c'est à dire les «mukharabat» britanniques. Ainsi, chacun de ses romans a une valeur documentaire énorme, bien plus grande que sa valeur proprement littéraire.

La description du *modus operandi* de l'opération est crissante de vérité, et même le profane peut reconnaître dans les détails de l'action des faits qui semblent être tout droit sortis de la réalité. Ainsi, sans que cela soit nullement indispensable au propos général de la trame, sont exposées les tensions entre les différents services des services de renseignements de sa Majesté ainsi que les luttes de pouvoir au sein de chaque «agence».

Quant à la facture même du livre, elle laisse quelque peu à désirer. Les lignes sont jonchées de coquilles et la quadrature de couverture évoque avec un humour involontaire, le «blanchiment» de l'argent sale. ■

Le Jourdain

« La libération de la Palestine est une affaire interne à la Jordanie »

Dr. Saïd Thiab, secrétaire général du Parti de l'unité populaire démocratique, se confie sur les grandes questions de la politique jordanienne. Cinquième volet du rendez-vous politique du Jourdain.

Le Jourdain : En quoi le Parti des partisans se démarque-t-il - ou ne se démarque-t-il pas - des autres partis d'opposition ?

Dr. Saïd Thiab : L'idéologie autour de laquelle se construit la vie politique interne et externe de notre parti naît des principes matérialiste et historique par le prisme desquels nous analysons la réalité, et nous donnons à notre action une dimension arabe.

Nous sommes ainsi conscients de cette particularité de la société de notre pays, le fait qu'elle soit double, l'une étant d'origine palestinienne et l'autre d'origine transjordanienne. Mais les relations entre ces deux «populations» sont très étroites, et c'est en partant de ce constat que nous nous fixons deux buts majeurs. D'une part la lutte pour fonder un état national démocratique en Jordanie en nous basant sur la doctrine socialiste et d'autre part la lutte pour la reconnaissance des droits du peuple palestinien, y compris le droit au retour, à l'autodétermination et à la fondation d'un état palestinien indépendant. Nous considérons que la lutte pour la libération de la Palestine est une affaire proprement interne à la Jordanie. Et nous sommes convaincus que ce problème ne peut se régler que par une politique arabe unifiée dans laquelle nous ne pouvons réellement ni défen-



« Il est certain que la Jordanie souffre d'une crise économique grave dont les racines sont historiques. »

Saïd Thiab

dre les droits des Palestiniens, ni provoquer une réelle insurrection arabe.

Quelle est votre position sur la paix israélo-jordanienne ? Pensez qu'il faille renégocier la paix ?

Ce traité crée un précédent grave. Le fait est que la Jordanie a accepté la location de ses propres territoires et qu'elle a accepté également l'implantation des Palestiniens dans des pays voisins - cela est mentionné dans l'article 8 du traité de paix. Par ailleurs ce

traité a causé du tort à la cause palestinienne car il ne traite pas Jérusalem comme une ville soumise à la souveraineté palestinienne, mais seulement comme une ville historiquement sainte. Les clauses imposées par la paix sont lourdes à digérer parce qu'elle a séparé la Jordanie des autres pays arabes, et qu'elle l'a jetée dans les bras des Israéliens. A partir de cela, nous luttons contre les articles sécuritaires, économiques, et politiques de ce traité.

Quelles grandes mesures sont selon vous nécessaires pour enrégimer l'augmentation de la pauvreté ?

Il est certain que la Jordanie souffre d'une crise économique grave dont les racines sont historiques car la fondation de la Jordanie en tant qu'Etat est liée, dès le départ, à une dépendance chronique à l'aide étrangère et aux emprunts extérieurs, et aux capitaux qui proviennent des pays du Golfe.

Mais ces aides ont été mal exploitées car elles n'ont pas permis de créer une base industrielle et agricole solide. Alors qu'elle aurait pu contribuer à améliorer la situation économique du pays. En revanche, toutes les ressources du pays sont utilisées dans le secteur des services, sans que les réels besoins de l'économie aient été étudiés. Je pense qu'il faut avant tout lutter contre la corruption et le népotisme qui règnent dans les institutions de l'Etat, en adoptant une politique transparente et claire. D'autre part il y a un rapport étroit entre le système éducatif et le développement de l'économie.

Il faut à notre avis réduire les dépenses publiques car le gouvernement agit comme celui d'un pays très riche. De plus, l'économie nationale est assujettie aux conditions très strictes du Fonds monétaire international.

Nous ne pouvons sortir de cette crise qu'en établissant une relation jordanienne avec le sein d'un marché commun arabe. En ce qui concerne le chômage, il faudra que la bourgeoisie jordanienne joue son rôle et rende une part de sa richesse aux chômeurs.

Que pensez-vous de la politique de libéralisation de l'économie ?

La libéralisation de l'économie est devenue monnaie courante dans le monde entier. Ce courant de libéralisation est déclenché par la mondialisation des échanges et est caractérisé par la domination des grandes entreprises qui s'intéressent aux petits pays dont le gouvernement n'ont qu'un rôle limité. C'est ainsi que les décisions importantes sont entre les mains de ces grandes entreprises qui compromettent le futur des sociétés locales. La privatisation à outrance entraînera l'incapacité de l'Etat à offrir aux citoyens les services de base tels l'éducation, la santé, etc.

L'adoption de cette politique de libéralisation a en outre contribué à aggraver le fossé social entre les plus riches et les plus pauvres. De plus en plus, certains pays prennent conscience que la privatisation à outrance entraîne toujours une augmentation du chômage. En Jordanie, nous estimons que le taux de chômage augmentera d'environ 6% si le cap de cette politique est maintenu.

Que pensez-vous de la situation de la presse en Jordanie ?

Nous traitons la loi de la

pression et des publications comme un problème de démocratie à part entière. Je dois dire que le monde arabe ne pourra pas se développer sans laisser libre cours aux capacités de chacun. La liberté d'expression garantit au citoyen une certaine sécurité dans la mesure où lui-même sent que ses propres libertés sont respectées.

La démocratie ne peut être un succès sans le pluralisme politique qui ne peut, lui-même, porter ses fruits si la liberté d'expression n'est pas respectée.

A la suite des accords de Wye, une conférence sur la question palestinienne s'est tenue récemment à Damas. Les partis de l'opposition jordanienne y ont été conviés avec le gouvernement leur a interdit de s'y rendre. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

Je pense que la décision gouvernementale visant à interdire la participation à cette conférence, aux partis d'opposition jordanienne n'est pas une mesure démocratique. Cette décision va à l'encontre des droits de l'homme, et je la considère comme illégale puisque la loi assure la liberté de voyager et d'exercer toute action selon les convictions personnelles de chacun. Il aurait été nécessaire que les partis expriment leur solidarité avec le front opposé à ces accords [les accords de Wye, NDLR]. Il est de plus grave que l'autorité palestinienne adopte l'abolition de la Charte palestinienne, car cette dernière représente le dernier rempart des Palestiniens pour se protéger contre l'invasion israélienne.

A ce propos, je soutiens toute action populaire luttant contre la conférence se tenant à Gaza pour enlever l'abolition de la Charte. ■

Propos recueillis par Youssef Abu-Saleh

*Cet entretien a été réalisé pendant la venue de Bill Clinton à Gaza.

The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul-Hamid Addasi

Sports Yearender Notebook

Tour de France tarnished

World Cup euphoria was replaced in less than a month by shock and bewilderment as the Tour de France, France's greatest sporting festival, ended in scandal and suspicion. Three days before the Tour opened in Ireland, Festina masseur Willy Voet was caught transporting 400 containers of banned drugs. Six days into the Tour, Festina team director Bruno Roussel and the team doctor were formally placed under investigation. Roussel admitted he had provided drugs to the team. As a result, Festina was banned and team leader Richard Virenque, King of the Mountains for four years in a row, quit in tears. The riders retaliated by dismounting and tearing off their official numbers in protest at the successive police raids on their hotels. Italian Marco Pantani eventually won the race on the same Champs-Elysees where an estimated number 800,000 revelers had celebrated the World Cup triumph. Police and judicial confirmation that the Tour was riddled with drugs still reverberates. Largely as a result, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to convene a special drugs conference at its Lausanne headquarters next February.

McGwire, Sosa and New York Yankees light up Baseball season

Across the Atlantic, a glorious baseball season unfolded, restoring American faith in the boys of summer four years after a national strike had soured the public perception of the national game.

Mark McGwire of the St Louis Cardinals slammed 70 home runs, smashing the record of 61 set by Roger Maris of the New York Yankees in 1961. The St Louis slugger was chased all season by Sammy Sosa, who finished with 66 homers. Cal Ripken voluntarily ended his 16-year record-breaking streak of consecutive games at 2632 and David Wells pitched a perfect game for the Yankees.

Wells, whose late mother Attitude Annie had ridden with a hell-raising motorcycle gang, was one of the more colorful members of an awesomely accomplished Yankee side, who set an American League record of 114 wins before romping to victory in the World Series.

Yet even baseball, redolent as it is with images of a vanished pastoral innocence, could not escape the taint of drugs. McGwire's mighty hitting was fueled partly by a steroid banned by the IOC but permitted in the Major League Baseball.

Winter Olympics survive weather

The Nagano Winter Olympics survived rain, wind, lightning, fog, excessive snow, a minor earthquake and an economic crisis in Japan. The first five days were lost to the weather and men's super-G was postponed six times. The racers wheeled three times in the downhill, but still won the super-G, followed by the giant slalom. Czech goal tender, Dominik Hasek, took his team through to the ice hockey title. Norwegian cross-country skier Bjorn Daelie became the most successful Winter Olympian with eight gold medals. In addition, at the age of 15 years and eight months only, American figure skater, Tara Lipinski, became the youngest Winter Olympic champion.

Hakkinen edges Schumacher

Mika Hakkinen, who was fortunate to survive a high-speed crash before the Australian Grand Prix 1,000 days previously, clinched the world drivers' championship title on the figure-eight Suzuka circuit. Hakkinen, Finland's first Formula One champion since his manager Keke Rosberg won the title in 1982, had been close to death after his McLaren hurtled into a barrier in Adelaide. He said the crash fastidied both maturity and judgment, qualities which were both to the fore during the 1998 season. German Michael Schumacher, his closest rival, stalled on the starting grid, then suffered a right rear tyre blowout on his Ferrari after finishing 32 laps out of 51.

Reviews of Sports Yearender 1998 Football: Aimé and Zinedine encapsulated

AIMÉ JACQUET defied almost endless criticism of his coaching methods and team selection to fashion France into World Cup winners.

Zinedine Zidane emerged as France's ultimate hero when his team beat Brazil 3-0 to win the World Cup final at the Stade de France on 12 July. Zidane scored two headers and later had his name emblazoned in lights on the Arc de Triomphe.

The French victory crowned the biggest-ever World Cup of 32 teams and inspired celebrations that had not been seen in the country since the end of World War Two.

World Cup mystery Apart from France's success, the World Cup also witnessed the year's greatest soccer mystery after Ronaldo's lethargic performance in the most one-sided World Cup final of all time.

After apparently suffering a seizure the night before the final, he was taken to hospital and his name left the team sheet for the game. But with less than an hour to go before kickoff, Ronaldo

arrived at the stadium and after major disagreements between the coaching staff, medical staff and senior players, the striker was put in the starting line-up.

Brazil failed to show for their pre-match warm-up, and it was clear almost from the first whistle that Ronaldo was completely out of sorts, looking slow, sluggish and playing carelessly.

Brazil never looked remotely like winning the match and when Emmanuel Petit scored the third and final goal in the last minute, France's victory was complete.

The two achieved it without a potent strike force which gave credit for both Jacquet and Zidane.

Jacquet's team overcame its lack of firepower, and the temporary loss of Zidane for two matches, by pushing defenders and midfielders into attacking positions as often as possible, and as a result, the goals were spread around the team.

Golden goal winner

Defender Lilian Thuram scored his first international goals in the 2-1 win over Croatia in the semifinal, while centre-back Laurent Blanc scored the golden goal winner in the 1-0 quarter-final victory over Paraguay.

Blanc, one of France's outstanding players, was denied a place in the final after being sent off in the semifinal when Croatian defender Slaven Bilic over-reacted to a touch from Blanc, collapsing and holding his head as if he had been pole-axed.

His later apology was rejected by the Frenchman, but symbolised one of the negative aspects of the tournament which produced a record number of 22 sendings off and 257 cautions.

Players were not only too quick to dive and feign injury, but

referees were also inconsistent, glib and under pressure from FIFA, whose conflicting messages on how to control matches, merely made matters worse.

Although the World Cup did not produce a truly great match, there were some memorable moments and goals. The goal of the tournament was scored by Dennis Bergkamp in the last minute of the Netherlands' quarter-final against Argentina.

With the score at 1-1, Bergkamp collected a lofted 70-metre pass from Frank de Boer. He controlled the ball with one touch, turned inside the defender with a second and volleyed it home with his third.

Superb solo effort

Argentina was also the victim of an audacious goal scored against the team in the second round by England teenager, Michael Owen, who ran through the defence to strike home after a run and shot of breathtaking skill.

After 120 minutes of unrelenting drama in which both teams held the lead and England reduced to 10 men just after halftime when David Beckham was sent off, the match finished 2-2. Argentina won 4-3 on penalties to secure a famous victory.

While the tournament saw a change in order of the top with the emergence of France and Croatia and the eclipse of an aging German side and the end of Brazil's reign as world champions, Europe still dominated.

The continent that produced seven of the eight quarter-finalists in 1994 had six in the last eight this time as Africa again failed to mount any sort of challenge.

Egypt, who lifted the African Nations Cup in February, failed to qualify for the World Cup, while runners-up South Africa were out of their depth in France.

Nigeria topped their group but crashed to earth in the second round to leave Africa still off the pace as new FIFA president Sepp Blatter argues its



case to host the 2006 World Cup. Blatter, 62, succeeded Brazilian Joao Havelange, 20 years his senior, who had been president of the world governing body for 24 years.

Election battle

The Swiss, Havelange's long-time deputy, won a fierce election battle against UEFA's 68-year-old Swedish president Lennart Johansson for the right to take soccer into the new millennium.

While the World Cup provided most of the on-field drama, administrators such as Johansson and Blatter have been battling to steer the ever-expanding global game forward without it being destroyed by a totally unworkable fixture list and sheer greed from the leading clubs and players. It is not yet clear whether they will succeed.

Once the World Cup was over, UEFA, with FIFA's backing, had to battle hard to see off the threat of a rival European Super League to its own Champions League.

UEFA have responded with an expanded Champions League offering tens of millions of dollars in prize money starting next year.

With the 2000 European championships just over the horizon and Blatter keen on the continuation of the largely meaningless Confederations Cup tournament for confederation winners, soccer is reaching saturation point. It is a worrying trend for the future. But in this year of profound change, there were two significant successes.

Real Madrid, who set European soccer alight with their five successive European Cup wins in the 1950s and early 1960s, was crowned European champions for the first time in 32 years when they beat Juventus 1-0 in the final in Amsterdam.

In England, Arsenal won the FA Cup and League Double for the second time in their history.

Their success in May owed much to the tactical ingenuity of their French coach Arsene Wenger.

Set and match to women's tennis in 1998

LONDON—After suffering years of sniping from the men's tour, women's tennis savoured the sweetest sensation of all in 1998, a success with a hint of revenge.

The men still hit the ball harder, they play five sets rather than three and earn more money. However, the women's tour now has the more potent advantages of charisma and personality in depth.

It was a great year for women's tennis. The season-ending tournaments epitomized a bad year for the men's ATP tour and a great 12 months for the women.

In a thrilling final at the Chase Championship, 18-year-old Martina Hingis beat Lindsay Davenport, who had ousted her as number one a month earlier.

On the other hand, the ATP championship in Hanover was ruined by injuries. Pat Rafter pulled out before it started and world number two, Marcelo Rios, soon followed suit.

Full of disappointment and exhaustion, Pete Sampras failed to make it to the finals. Meanwhile, he still clinched the number one spot for the sixth year in succession.

The American world champion seems weary with the daily grind of full-time tennis and asked for more respect for his achievements, which included a fifth Wimbledon title this year.

Hingis and Davenport were happy to talk of a battle royal for the number one spot in 1999 with a resurgent Steffi Graf, the Williams sisters and veterans Monica Seles, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Jana Novotna in the frame.

Battle for top spot

Davenport beat Hingis in the US Open final, by winning her first grand slam title, while the American took over the number one spot from the Swiss, who, this time last year, looked prepared to dominate women's tennis for many years to come.

While Sampras remains the biggest name in men's tennis, his domination is becoming a problem. Voted the best player in the past 25 years by his peers, the American champion still struggles to capture the public's admiration and will never set pulses racing like Andre Agassi or Pat Rafter.

Another dilemma for the men's tour is that top players rarely meet, either on or off the court, which means that rivalries to equal Borg/McEnroe or Lendl/Becker never have a chance to grow.

Brief stint at number one Sampras declared on November that he had

never had a conversation with Rios, who fleetingly pushed Sampras off the top of the tennis tree during the year.

Astonishingly Sampras met his rival—the clay court specialist—at the 1994 French Open. Before that, he lost to Alex Corretja, who is now ranked three in the semifinals of the ATP championship on November.

Corretja went on to win the Hanover title, taking revenge on compatriot Carlos Moya who had beaten him to win the French Open in straight sets in June.

The opening grand slam of the year, the Australian Open, threw up an

unexpected winner in Czech veteran, Peter Korda, who beat Rios in straight sets. Korda, who almost retired from tennis in 1995 because of a chronic injury, said it was a dream come true to win a top four title at the age of 30. The victory seemed to be enough as his form and will to win melted away over the rest of the year.

Sampras, who had not fully recovered from a leg injury in Melbourne, was the hot favourite to win at Wimbledon and he did not lose a set on the way to a semi-final with local hero, Tim Henman.

Henman was swept aside in four sets before Sampras emerged victorious from a five-set power battle with Goran Ivanisevic.

It was his fifth Wimbledon title in six years which was one of the four titles that Sampras won in 1998.

his worst performance in seven years. Australian Rafter also retained a grand slam title he had won in 1997 when he beat compatriot Mark Philippoussis in the US Open final.

Like Sampras, Rafter felt that he played too much tennis this year and plans to take it easier in the future. Nevertheless, the men's game needs the photogenic Rafter to have a good year and for Agassi, ranked sixth, once again to become a contender at the big tournaments.

Similar to men, four different women won the grand slams. Hingis started the year as she finished 1997, looking as if she would sweep all before her, and she cruised past Conchita Martinez to win the Australian Open title.

But she was surprisingly beaten by Seles in the French Open semifinals and, from then on, seemed to take her foot off the pedal as she enjoyed being a teenager rather than a tennis automaton.

Seles, mourning her father who died three weeks before, was beaten by Sanchez-Vicario in the Paris final, the Spaniard's third French Open title, despite winning the second set 6-0. All in all, 1998 was anything but a success for her.



The Astonishing Sampras



Real Madrid, European champions

Boxing: Tyson still grabs headlines in drab 1998

NEW YORK—Although he did not fight this year, Mike Tyson still grabs the headlines. The former world heavyweight champion charged his CO manager and promoter Don King with stealing millions of dollars and pleaded no contest to kicking a man in the groin and punching another after a minor traffic accident in Maryland.

He pleaded no contest to the assault charges and the two men dropped their cases.

Tyson, who has not fought since his license was revoked for biting the ears of Evander Holyfield in June, 1997. Bout said that he was under a psychiatrist's care and has agreed to fight South African Francois Botha in January.

The current heavyweight champions, Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis, did not distinguish themselves.

Title retained

Holyfield plodded through most of his fight with the forgettable Vaughn Bean before winning a 12-round decision in September to retain his International Boxing Federation (IBF) title. Holyfield had been scheduled to fight Henry Akinwande in June before

the Briton tested positive for Hepatitis B the week of the fight.

In a forgettable year of the heavyweights, Lewis was almost knocked down by young Shannon Briggs in the first round of their World Boxing Council (WBC) bout and was rocked in the second.

Lewi came back to knock Briggs down three times in the fifth round to retain his title. He then outpointed unheralded Croatian Zeljko Mavrovic in September before fewer than 4,000 people.

Holyfield and Lewis finally signed to fight in March to unify the main heavyweight titles. Two of the best fights of the year were between the little men.

Spectacular bouts

Mini-flyweights Mexican Ricardo Lopez, boxing's longest reigning world champion, and Nicaraguan Rosendo Alvarez battled each other twice. In their first encounter in March, Alvarez knocked down Lopez, who won the WBC title in 1990, for the first time in his career. The fight was ruled a technical draw as the result of a head punch and Lopez kept his title. The two met again in November with Lopez taking a serious beating but still earning a split decision after a spectacular brawl.

In January the WBC junior lightweight title changed hands when Angel Manfredy upset Arturo Gatti. This month, Manfredy went after Floyd Mayweather Jr's WBC featherweight crown.

Mayweather had become the first 1996 Olympian to win a world title when he stopped Genaro Hernandez in October to win the WBC super-featherweight crown in only his 18th fight. He stopped Manfredy in the second round with lightning-fast combinations, serving notice that he is ready to keep a date



with his self-imposed destiny of greatness.

Fernando Vargas became the second fighter from the Olympic class of 1996 to win a world title when he stopped veteran Yory Boy Campas for the International Boxing Federation junior middleweight belt earlier this month. It was only Vargas' 15th fight.

Oscar de la Hoya, the undisputed heartthrob of boxing, kept his undefeated record intact, with two fights this year.

Fashion show

His first bout of the year was a combination of a fashion show and an execution of hapless Frenchman Patrick Charpentier in El Paso, Texas.

De la Hoya made a grand entrance dressed in a skin-tight Mexican cowboy outfit to the delight of his squealing fans and finally put Charpentier out of his misery in the third round to retain his WBC welterweight crown.

In a grudge match in September, de la Hoya stopped Julio Cesar Chavez in the eighth round for Chavez's third loss in 106 fights.

De la Hoya had stopped Chavez on cuts in the first fight two years

earlier, but de la Hoya was angered that Chavez did not pay him proper respect for winning and sought the rematch.

The award for show boater of the year went to Prince Naseem Hamed, the British boxer who seems to have spent more effort choreographing his walk to the ring than in perfecting his craft.

Hamed, signed to a multimillion-dollar contract by the cable network Home Box Office, fought twice this year.

He retained his World Boxing Organization featherweight title by stopping 37-year-old Wilfredo Vasquez, a former champion, in April in Manchester, England.

In Atlantic City in October, the Yemini-born Englishman ran the record to 31-0 with a unanimous, but unimpressive decision over Wayne Moore, who last fought when he was 49, won the light-heavyweight title in 1952 at the age of 39 and held it for 10 years, longer than any man in history.



Oscar de la Hoya

Jorda Europe

THE STAR'S WORK COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

1998, an active year of computing in Jordan: A lookback at a year of 'local' computing

JORDAN, like the rest of the world, enjoyed an active year of computing and information technology. 1998 was another year of growth in computing and increased penetration of technology. Here are some events and facts that characterize the year past.

Another internet year in Jordan

It is estimated that there are around 12,000 internet and on-line accounts in Jordan, accessed by no less than 20,000 people. Throughout 1998, the internet spread in Jordan. It was another internet year, which witnessed two new Internet Service Providers (ISPs), bringing the total number to six ISPs. Other companies hold ISP licenses, but are yet to offer their full-fledged services.

Jordan on the Web

The number of Web sites on Jordan and covering Jordanian issues multiplied throughout 1998, providing a much better presence for the country, its organizations and individuals on the Web. In fact, His Majesty the King launched his own Web site, which was pioneering move for an Arab, or Middle Eastern, leader.

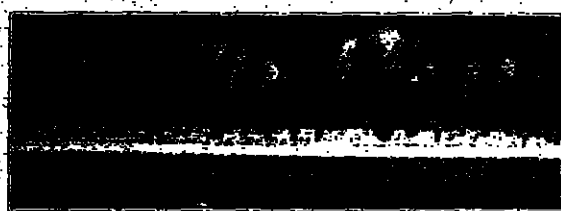
PC prices tumble

In 1998, the entry-level price for a well configured Pentium system dropped to as low as JD 600 (that is including modem and multimedia). This was the year when com-

puting became much more affordable. As new Pentium II processors were introduced, it was surprising to find that the price kept on dropping.

The triumph of the 'assembled' PC

Continuing a trend that began a number of years ago, the 'assembled' PC reigned supreme throughout 1998. Leading brands didn't even



come close to the size of sales expected. Owing to the standardization of computer components, buyers began to trust unbranded PCs and this looks set to continue into 1999.

Jordanian software developers go global

Exporting their programming skills abroad, Jordanian software developers took on more business from Europe, the USA and other parts of the world, heralding the era of exporting skills, without even having to leave Amman!

This is a growth industry and, it seems, that our local programmers are beginning to make their presence felt regionally and internationally.

A year of computing events 1998 witnessed a number of successful computing and technology events. The Middle East

Computer & IT companies!

Welcome to The Star's Workstation, the absolute source on what's hot and what's not in Jordan's IT market. email us at Star@NETS.com.jo or star1@go.com.jo with your news and views.

Lotus FastSite 2.0 Offers the Fastest Way to Move Office Files to the Web, Keep Content Up-to-Date: Web solutions for Microsoft Office

LOTUS DEVELOPMENT Corp has announced Lotus FastSite 2.0, a Web solution that enables users of Microsoft Office, Lotus SmartSuite and other popular desktop applications to quickly and easily move groups of files to an intranet, extranet or Internet site and keep that content up-to-date. Today, huge quantities of organizational knowledge reside not only in database applications, but in desktop application files as well. These files, many of which are updated every day, are often at the core of an organization's

knowledge base. Lotus FastSite is the quickest way to move these files from Microsoft Office and other popular desktop applications to the Web. In three easy steps, anyone can use FastSite 2.0 to move files from the most popular office suite files to an existing collaborative infrastructure, such as an intranet or external Web site, without becoming a Webmaster. FastSite is the only multi-file, cross-product solution for organizations that want to quickly and easily provide access to data trapped in proprietary file for-

mat. FastSite is the universal Web solution missing from Microsoft Office and other desktop applications. Only with FastSite can organizations efficiently and comprehensively leverage the important data that resides in these widely-used applications. FastSite fills a gap in the largely expert-oriented world of Web publishing. FastSite's unique multi-file, cross-product conversion, formatting and publishing technology allows end-users to quickly and easily unlock that trapped knowledge and share it over intranets, extranets or the Internet without any special training or Web expertise. ■



Finally, Internet in Saudi Arabia, but with advanced 'site-censorship'

SAUDI ARABIA plans to extend the Internet to local service providers, in another step towards giving the kingdom's 18 million inhabitants local access to the Web. The King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), charged with supervising the Internet, had successfully tested the service, which will make some sites off limits.

Industry sources in the kingdom said the introduction of the Internet service had triggered mergers between small Internet service providers (ISPs). At least eight ISPs have already merged, they added.

The actual launch of the Internet service through King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology would begin on January the 2nd. At present, people living in Saudi Arabia can only access the Internet by making more expensive international calls to neighboring states like Bahrain. Batelec, the official telecommunications company of Bahrain said that it was providing at least 2,500 users with Internet services in Saudi Arabia. ■

News update

Taiwan will be top CD-ROM producer in '99
According to a product sales report from Taiwan's Market Intelligence Center (MIC), CD-ROM drives, scanners, and monitors pro-

duced in Taiwan will rank at the top in world production next year.

Because Japan's CD-ROM drive manufacturers are now developing DVD drives and decreasing production of CD-ROM drives, it is predicted that Taiwan will increase its world market share of CD-ROM drives to 45 percent in 1999.

Taiwan scanners will next year still rank as number one, with more than 90 percent of the world market share. And monitor production in Taiwan next year will have a growth rate of 16.4 percent.

Oracle & Sun announce new PC type

Oracle Corp and Sun Microsystems Inc. in a direct assault on their mutual arch rival Microsoft Corp., are

announcing that they will work together on a new type of computer that does not require an operating system. This latest assault from Sun and Oracle could obviate the need for the software giant's Windows NT operating system, designed for heavy-duty computing.

NT competes primarily with Sun's own brand of the Unix operating system called Solaris and Hewlett-Packard Co.'s called HP-UX. Even so, Microsoft's Windows runs more than 80 percent of the world's personal computers and sales of its NT operating system are growing faster than its competitors.

Sun is the world's largest maker of computer workstations, and Oracle is the largest database software company.

Beware: The Trojan Horses

A PARTICULARLY 'lethal' type of computer viruses, known as the Trojan Horse, is running rampant nowadays, spreading through the Internet to computer networks all over the world. Recently, a new program appeared that enables others to get access to your computer via the Internet. It is similar to earlier Trojan Horses, with the difference that this one does not need a special administration program.

Some Trojan Horses can display threats and messages on your screen, or have your CD-ROM disk drive poll in and out! The Trojan Horse is usually included with games sent via e-mail. It installs itself and starts up automatically when the computer is turned on. So, beware. If your computer starts acting 'strange', after downloading a file, you may have been run-over by a Trojan Horse. ■

INTERFACE BY ZEID NASSER

New Year thoughts

CONCLUDING ANOTHER action-packed year of computing and information technology is quite inspiring, especially as we approach the millennium.

When I was first introduced to a computer, in the early eighties, I always wondered what computers would be like in the Year 2000.

Back then, the whole idea of the Year 2000 and the millennium was surrounded with an aura of fiction and fantasy! Books, films and documentaries all looked towards the Year 2000, with great hopes and expectations for a 'techno-gized-society' where robots did our work for us, and computers had minds of their own! In reality the Year 2000 looks set to be something different, and maybe less futuristic than science-fiction movies. But we can say one thing that IB computers have permeated every single aspect of our lives and, today, thanks to the spread of computer use, almost everyone has been introduced to a computer, whether at home, at school or at the office. In a developing country like Jordan, computers and technology influence all fields of life in government and in the private sector.

1998 was a year when the Internet spread like wildfire, and when networked environments changed the face of computing. The year had its ups and downs, but overall it took us one step closer towards the 'information society'. For some of us who have experienced the world of computing for two decades it is thrilling to see how things have developed and how much computing power we have on our desks today, and how little it relatively costs!

Gone are the days when people used to say things like 'do you understand computing', or 'are you into computers'. Today, everyone is into computers. With the new century on the horizon, the future looks bright. Let's hope we, here in Jordan, can utilize the information revolution successfully. Happy New Year 1999, wishing you all another great year of computing. ■

Jordanian 'popular culture' on the Internet, for the world to see

SOMETHING YOU have to see on the Internet is the site of 'Abu Mahjoub', the famous character featured in the local press, created by Imad Hajjaj.

This character resembles the typical, daily life of the average Jordanian and his friends, family and neighbors. Apart from the fact that it has won acclaim from people inside and outside Jordan, the important thing about 'Abu Mahjoub's' grand entry into the electronic world is that it utilizes all the best things about the Internet.

You have access to a long archive of 'Abu Mahjoub' cartoons, covering some six months.

Also, you have access to some cartoons never published before. What's more, you can forward a cartoon to a friend or download it onto your computer to enjoy it whenever you choose to. For most of us, the Internet really started to get interesting when it addressed our different entertainment, educational and business needs.

Now, with things like the 'Abu Mahjoub' cartoons, everyone, even the typical citizen, on the street, can find something entertaining on the Web. To check out 'Abu Mahjoub' go to www.baladna.com. You'll have some laughs, and it will make you think about the things that characterize our daily lives. But, most important of all, it will provide you with another reason to love the Internet. ■



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Famous mosque in Kuala Lumpur



Look at the origins of Katayef and you'll be surprised!

AMMAN (Star)—Delicious, mouth-watering *Katayef*? This is what all Muslims eat after the break of the fast at the evening prayer. After the main meal, it has become the practice in every Jordanian household to eat *Katayef*, a sort of pastry stuffed with different goodies and immersed with syrup to quench the appetite after a long fast.

But has anybody sought to really dwell on the meaning and origin of the word *Katayef* is derived from the verb *Katafa* which means to pick or reap the harvest, says Dr Mohammad Al Droubi, a professor of Arabic in Al Al Bayt University.

He adds that the singular of *Katayef* is *Kateefah* which simply means velvet. "*Katayef* was given such a name because it feels like velvet when you run your fingers on it," adds Al Droubi.

The professor points out that the word *Katayef* goes back to the Umayyad period, and some even attribute the exact origin to Caliph Muawiyah Bin Abu Sufyan who had been ill because of hunger during Ramadan.

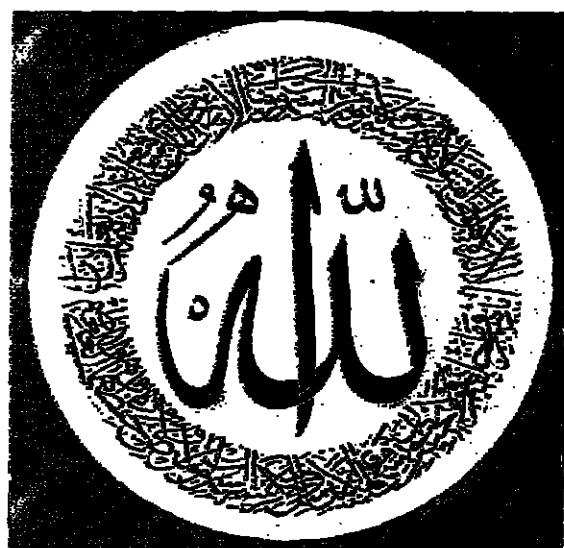
"When he consulted his physician Mohammad Bin Athal, he told him to eat *Katayef* during *Sohour*, (second meal eaten before dawn to signal the start of the fast)," Al Droubi continues.

However, the professor of Arabic suggests that there are different interpretations. Some historians attribute the word *Katayef* Sulayman Ben Abdel Malik, "but what is certain is the word *Katayef* was first introduced during Umayyad rule."

Also many Arab poets have written verses of poetry about the mouth-watering *Katayef*. One poet is even named Abu Kateifah.



Art of Islamic calligraphy



THE ARABIC language is inseparably linked with the religion of Islam. The holy book of Islam, the Qur'an, played a central role in the development and evolution of the Arabic script, and by extension, calligraphy.

Today, calligraphy has become the most revered art form in the Islamic world because it links the literary heritage of the Arabic language with the religion of Islam. The result is an artistic tradition of extraordinary beauty, richness and power.

Calligraphy is an extremely demanding activity, and most of the great Muslim masters devoted their lives to perfecting their art. Mastery of calligraphy requires not only the discipline of developing technical skill, but also the engagement of the calligrapher's moral force and personality.

Islam in Arabic means "submission" and derives from a word meaning "peace," for it is in submitting to God's Will that human beings gain

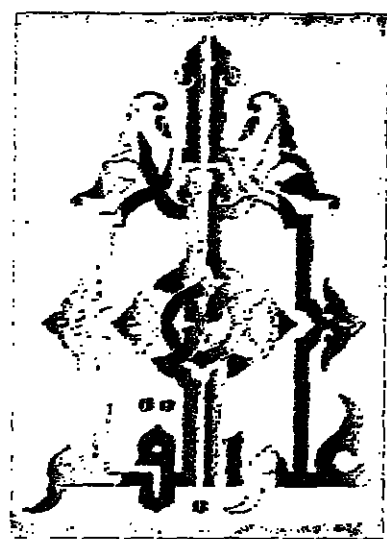
peace in their lives in this world and the hereafter. Islam is a universal message revealed in the sacred book, the Quran, through the Prophet Muhammad, and shares with the other Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Christianity, their ethical teachings and the belief in the One God. Islam is both a religion and a way of life.

For Muslims the Quran is the actual Word of God revealed through the archangel Gabrielle to the Prophet of Islam during the 23 year period of his prophetic mission. It was revealed in the Arabic language, which became therefore the language of Islam even for non-Arab Muslims.

Early calligraphic developments, the North Arabic script, which was influenced by the Nabatean script, was established in north-eastern

some minor variations, these are the "dry styles," the early predecessors of Kufic, and the "moist styles," the early predecessors of the cursive family or scripts.

With the increasing number of non-Arab Muslims, there was a greater need for facilitating reading and learning of Arabic. Since several letters of the Arabic alphabet share the same shapes, and since vowels are not clearly indicated, some reform was



critical marks:

Fathah (a), Dammah (u), Kasrah (i), Sukun (vowelless), Shaddah (double consonant), and Maddah (vowel prolongation) which is applied to the Alef. Development of cursive scripts Cursive scripts coexisted with Kufic and date back to before Islam, but because in the early stages of their development they lacked discipline and elegance, they were usually used for secular purposes only.

Under the Umayyads and Abbasids, court requirements for correspondence and record keeping resulted in many developments to the cursive scripts, and several styles were devised to fulfill these needs. Abu Ali Muhammad Ibn Muqlah (d. 940), along with his brother, became accomplished calligraphers in Baghdad in an early age. Abu Ali became a Vizir to three Abbasid caliphs, and is credited with developing the first script to obey strict proportional rules. His system utilized the dot as a measuring unit for line proportions, and a circle with a diameter equals to the Alef's height as a measuring unit for letter proportions.

Ibn Muqlah's system became a powerful tool in the development and standardization of cursive scripts, and his calligraphic work elevated the previous cursive styles into a place of prominence, and made them acceptable as worthy of writing the Quran.

needed to avoid confusion, and a system of Naqi or Ijam (letter-pointing), and Tashkeel (vowel indication) was developed.

Abul Aswad al Du'ali (d. 688) was the legendary founder of Arabic grammar, and is credited with inventing the system of placing large colored dots to indicate the Tashkeel. It was used with the Kufic script, but proved to be somewhat cumbersome to use with smaller scripts, or in ordinary writing.

The Umayyad governor al Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al Thaqafi enforced a uniform system to distinguish letters by using dots, which he asked two of al Du'ali's students to codify.

Al Khalil Ibn Ahmad al Farahidi (d. 786) devised a tashkeel system to replace Abu al Aswad's. His system was universally used since the early eleventh century, and included six dia-



Jordanians celebrate new year in style

Lubna Khader
Star Staff Writer

AT 12 o'clock midnight on 31 December the world welcomes yet another new year. People from all corners of the globe will spend the night each celebrating in his own way.

In France for instance, people go down to the streets to celebrate the occasion. The famous Champs Elysees street receives thousands of people who crowd the boulevard while drinking, singing and dancing. At midnight, in all hugs and kisses with everybody wishing each other a happy new year. But how do people in Jordan, celebrate this occasion?

In Amman, for instance, young people slowly gather in the city center to celebrate the occasion. At midnight, they start the festivities by a display of fireworks.

"After the show, we drive our cars around the city while honking and waving our hands in the air," said Gamal Akrouh, a university student. "This night is the most fun evening for me. My friends and I celebrate in our way by driving our cars while honking non-stop until 2 in the morning," added the young student. New year's eve comes just a week after Christmas and many people see it as an added bonus to continue with the celebrations.

Many people choose to return home after the outdoors celebrations to continue the festivities which usually go on till the early hours of the morning.

Others choose to spend the night with the family who gather around in a joyous mood of singing and dancing. This is started by a special dinner followed by a rich menu of sweets and puddings.

This is what Rania Al Wajidi, a teacher, does. "We meet at my uncle's house at new year's eve where we cook and prepare pastries. We then sit around the table to eat and watch TV. At midnight we shout and hug each other in an expression of joy," said.

"We all gather at my grandfather's house," said Rawan Haddad, a secondary school student. "Each family brings a meal along. We usually have a delicious banquet full of different kinds of dishes that include meat, chicken and fish. We usually have dinner before 12 o'clock. After midnight we have some sweets—*Knafah* is everyone's favorite," she added.

Some families turn off the lights a few minutes before midnight and light them back once the clock rings 12. As it is the tradition, churches ring their bells at midnight announcing the arrival of the new year.

Another tradition calls for breaking a pottery jar to get rid of any misfortune that may have occurred in the previous year.

"This night has special memories for me and my family. We all gather for this special occasion to have dinner at a restaurant. We then head for home to watch TV"

said Deema Al Shaer. Deema along with her two friends Vanda and Nahed believe that the new year eve is an occasion for the whole family to get together.

"This evening is not limited to Christians. Muslims as well celebrate but in their own way," Waleed Al Rfaai said. "Every year my friends and I gather at one of the houses where we'd watch TV, play cards and chat" adds Waleed, an employee in one of the private companies.

"This year I will welcome the new year at one of the hotels in Amman," said Nasser Mustafa, a businessman. "I used to celebrate it with my family at home but my friends urged me to celebrate it with them this year," Mustafa adds.

"There will be nothing unusual for my family and I for this particular evening. We will sit around the screen and watch TV as usual" said Gehan Shalabi.

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